LETTERS

CONCERNING

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH,

AND SUBSCRIPTIONS TO

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

IN

PROTESTANT CHURCHES;

OCCASIONED BY PERUSAL OF THE

CONFESSIONAL.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BENJAMIN WHITE,
AT HORACE'S HEAD, FLEET-STREET.
MDCC LXVIII.

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ESPECIALLY BY THOSE OF THIS

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

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LETTERS

Concerning Confeſſions of Faith and Subſcription to Articles of Religion, &c.

LETTER I.

Dear Sir,

AS a lover of truth, and particularly of religious truth, I doubt not of your giving me leave, to lay before you my ſentiments, concerning a late publication; that I may, by your judgment, either be confirmed in my opinions, or convinced of my miſtakes.—For though it be too common to be more ſollicitous to maintain an opinion, than to come at truth; I hope the latter only is my wiſh.—It is with this view that I offer you my remarks upon the Confeſſional. Which, however it may appear, at firſt ſight, to be wrote in favour of the proteſtant cauſe; and how much ſoever the author may abhor popery; (for I am far from wiſhing to ſet our author's *deſign* in an odious light;) appears to me to aim at more than perhaps the author is willing, at preſent, to acknowlege; and to draw on conſequences ſo favorable to popery, as I doubt not he does not intend. You have here then, Sir, a principal motive of my troubling you with the peruſal of the following ſheets.—And if you have the patience

to go through them, it can be only the conſideration of the importance of the ſubject that muſt induce you ſo to do. For I cannot promiſe you any entertainment.—As I do not propoſe to attempt any embelliſhments by ſarcaſtic wit.—Perhaps it will be ſuppoſed, I pretend to avoid what I cannot arrive at. And whoever chooſes ſo to account for the matter, has my leave ſo to do.—I ſhall not, with an unneceſſary preamble, fatigue that patience I have ſo much occaſion to ſpare; and therefore beg leave to conclude, by aſſuring you, I am,

Sir, your moſt obedient humble ſervant, &c.

LETTER II.

THE firſt thing, Sir, we ſeem to have to do, in our remarks on the Confeſſional, is to enquire into the deſign of the author.—And that becauſe he, or ſome of his friends, has expreſſed much indignation, in a letter publiſhed ſome time in the ſummer 1767, in the St. James's Chronicle, on being taxed with a deſign to ſhow, "*That no acknowledgment of, or ſubſcription to any confeſſion of faith, ſetting forth the principal articles of belief, profeſſed in any particular church, ought to be required of the members, or even the miniſters thereof*;" or, in other Words, "*That all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, with a teſt of principles, are unlawful.*" That this is the real deſign, though only further reformation of the articles is in general pleaded for, may appear from ſome expreſſions, which, as far as I can judge, import no leſs.—For inſtance; in the preface to the firſt edit. p. 52. of the ſecond edit.

edit. (which edition I always quote) the author ſays, "*The toleration contended for, by the advocates of religious freedom, was* abſolute liberty, juſt and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, *upon the principle that neither ſingle perſon, nor churches, nay nor even commonwealths, have juſt title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion.*"—Now, as our author all along calls the requiring ſubſcriptions an unjuſt impoſition, and invaſion of chriſtian liberty, he muſt look upon all ſuch requiring of ſubſcription, to be an invaſion of the liberty he contends for; and conſequently unlawful.—Nay, the very force of the argument depends upon this ſenſe of his expreſſion; becauſe he is here endeavouring to ſhow that the teſt act, or any teſt act requiring any religious conformity, is ſuch an invaſion.

Again, Confeſſional, ch. i. page 24, 25. we have the following aſſertion; "*The practice of requiring ſubſcription to human explications of chriſtian doctrine, is now conſidered and treated by many different ſorts of ſenſible writers, as an unwarrantable encroachment on chriſtian liberty.*"—With regard to all ſubſcriptions, except ſuch as is mentioned in p. 17. of this chapter, the matter is here, I think plain; and as to that in the ſaid page, it will be conſidered hereafter.

Further, p. 26. we meet with the following concluſion, viz. *All impoſed ſubſcriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unſcriptural terms, and enforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable.*"—Which I think deciſive. Whether there might not be prudential reaſons, for keeping this deſign ſomewhat hid for a time; (as it might, without ſome preparation, have diſguſted many who wiſh well to liberty, but diſ-

tinguiſh between liberty and anarchy) I leave to others to determine.—Nor would I be ſuppoſed to accuſe the author of defending a doctrine, which he is convinced is wrong, and therefore conceals; but I only would hint, that poſſibly he might fear this doctrine might not go well down without ſome preparatives.—What leads me to ſuppoſe this, is, that he ſeems to think his readers ſufficiently prepared, by what he has urged before, when in chapter the laſt, p. 358, 359. he ſays, "*Had you ſhewn a diſpoſition to reform theſe neceſſary matters* (as he chuſes to call them, viz. things which the diſquiſitors had objected to) *and had you ſet about it with alacrity*;" what then?—One would reaſonably hope they would have been contented. Inſtead of that he goes on, "*Time and credit would have been given you for the reſt.*"—Is not this ſaying, as plainly as need be; "*If you will chearfully and readily comply with moſt of our preſent demands, we will defer, what we have further to aſk, for ſome time.*" By the bye, does not this laſt quoted ſentence ſeem rather confeſſing, than diſproving a ſuppoſed accuſation of the *free and candid diſquiſitors*, "*That they aimed at a Reform according to the ſyſtem of Arius and Socinus,*" which is mentioned in the preceding paragraph?—Eſpecially as the ſaid ſentence is introduced with theſe words, "*Let the diſquiſitors anſwer for themſelves*;" and followed by, "*This I preſume to ſay on the part of the diſquiſitors.*"—Which I think ſhews that our author is ſo far connected with them, as to know that, after leſs conſiderable conceſſions obtained, they intend the above-ſaid Reform. And this is only mentioned as a confirmation that eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments in general are aimed at, though reformation only chiefly

chiefly talked of; ſince we have here an avowal of a deſign beyond what was firſt pleaded for, in thoſe whom our author appears connected with; and whoſe ſchemes he ſeems to adopt.—Theſe are only particular inſtances ſelected, to ſhow that this ſuſpicion of the deſign of the Confeſſional is not taken up without grounds.—To an attentive reader, I doubt not but the whole tenor of the arguments, as well as many other particular expreſſions, will confirm it.—For is not the very firſt enquiry propoſed in the title-page, concerning the right in general of eſtabliſhing confeſſions?—Is there not an whole chapter employed in this enquiry?—Are not all the arguments calculated to ſhew, that there is neither neceſſity, equity, nor utility in ſuch eſtabliſhments?—Does not the author endeavour to ſhew, that our articles can neither honeſtly be ſubſcribed with latitude nor with preciſion?—And are not the principal part of his arguments on theſe heads, as applicable to any ſuppoſable confeſſion as to ours?—Again, does he not employ a long preface on Dr. Rutherforth, becauſe he has undertook a vindication of this general right?—Does he not largely oppoſe the Biſhop of Glouceſter, for ſhewing that our accepting the protection of the civil power is allowable on goſpel principles? Beſides, how can we be miſtaken in ſuppoſing this to be the deſign of the Confeſſional, when thoſe avowed eſpouſers of it, the monthly reviewers, no doubt are of the ſame opinion; for they would never beſtow ſuch eulogiums upon it, unleſs they ſuppoſed it defended their ſentiments; and they poſitively declare, they are againſt *all ſubſcriptions*.—But, perhaps, I have all this while been endeavouring to prove what the

author himſelf will acknowledge; if ſo, I muſt plead the letter above-mentioned as miſleading me; and proceed to enquire how he has ſucceeded in this deſign; if otherwiſe, the above reaſons are ſubmitted to the conſideration of the Impartial; and to you, Sir, in particular, by,

Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Dear Sir,

IN the title-page of the Confeſſional, the ſubject of enquiry firſt mentioned, is the Right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions of faith.—In the book itſelf, the Utility, or however the Succeſs is enquired into before the Right.—I know not whether the author might think it for the advantage of his queſtion, firſt, to raiſe ſome prejudices againſt the Utility of confeſſions, by attempting to ſhew their ill ſucceſs; in order to gain a more favourable attention to his attack, on the Right of enjoining them; or whether he might judge it would look like a diſtruſt of his own concluſions concerning the Right, afterwards to enquire concerning the Utility or Succeſs; becauſe, if the Right was fully diſproved, the Utility ſeemed an immaterial queſtion. Be that as it will, with a defender of this Right the matter is juſt the reverſe; for having ever ſo firmly eſtabliſhed the Right, there might yet be room to object to their Utility.—For this reaſon, we ſhall firſt enquire into the Right.

The

The author appears to me not to have uſed ſufficient preciſion, as to the particular ſpecies of Right, he denies the church in theſe matters.—For he occaſionally oppoſes the legal or poſitive Right, derived from the civil power; the equitable Right; and alſo that derived from ſcripture or apoſtolical practice.—It will therefore be neceſſary to avoid all exceptions, to conſider each of theſe claims.—But as the author ſeems to deny the Right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions, both as teſts of lay communion, and of fitneſs for the miniſtry; it may be proper to aſcertain the different efficacy of a confeſſion in theſe different views.

A confeſſion of faith therefore, conſidered as a teſt of lay-communion, I look upon as a criterion or evidence, by which the members of the ſame church voluntarily declare to each other, to what religious ſociety or church they belong.

But a confeſſion of faith, conſidered as a teſt of fitneſs for the miniſtry, I look upon to be a ſecurity to the religious ſociety in general, and to the eccleſiaſtical governors in particular, That the confeſſor's intention at that time, is to teach ſuch doctrines as he believes are expected to be taught, in that church, wherein he is to be a teacher, and to conform to the form of worſhip and diſcipline eſtabliſhed therein.

Now concerning the right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions, we will firſt enquire as to our legal or poſitive authority.

I do not perceive that we are accuſed of claiming any authority over the laity in this matter, which does not belong to us by law; and therefore we need not enter upon our defence herein.

But, with regard to the clergy, at leaſt a part of the legal right claimed, is peremptorily denied, in the Confeſſional; whether on good grounds or no, we are now to examine.—Only by the way, one cannot but obſerve, that if this is really the caſe, it ſhould ſeem that one of the courts in Weſtminſter would moſt effectually relieve thoſe, who think themſelves therein aggrieved.

Our author maintains, that by the ſtatute of the 13th of Eliz. no ſubſcription is required to any articles, except ſuch as "*only concern the confeſſion of the true faith, and the doctrine of the ſacraments.*" And ſubjoins, "*That the limiting clauſe is ſtill in it's full force.*" Pref. to 2d edit. p. 10—12, and note.—Here we join iſſue.

Whether the doctrinal and ſacramental articles, mentioned in the 1ſt ſect. of the ſaid ſtatute, or the whole 39 articles (which are likewiſe mentioned in the ſame ſection) are referred to in the ſubſequent clauſes, may perhaps bear ſome diſpute. For the whole 39 articles are mentioned after the doctrinal and ſacramental ones; and conſequently, according to the general rules of conſtruction (as being laſt mentioned) may moſt properly be referred to, by the ſubſequent expreſſions, *the ſaid articles, and any of the ſaid articles.* Again, Mr. P. W's. ſentiments, mentioned by our author, are no proof of the ſentiments of the whole houſe.—But not to inſiſt much on this point, (though it ſeemed worth mentioning) let us examine how the caſe ſtands ſince the act of uniformity, viz. the 14th Car. 2. —This, our author tells us, leaves the limiting clauſe in the 13th Eliz. "*In its full force to this hour.*"—Perhaps on inſpection it may appear otherwiſe.—The act of uniformity enjoins that all,

who

who are there required to ſubſcribe, "*ſhall ſubſcribe unto the nine and thirty articles mentioned in the ſtatute made in the 13th year of the reign of the late Q. Elizabeth.*"—Now if the 39 articles, to which ſubſcription is now required in the church of England, are mentioned in that ſtatute of the 13th Eliz. I think the concluſion is clear, That ſubſcription to the 39 articles is required by the act of uniformity. But mention is made of the 39 articles, to which ſubſcription is now required in the church of England, in that ſtatute; for mention is there made of "*A book imprinted, entituled articles, whereupon it was agreed by the archbiſhops and biſhops, of both provinces, and the whole clergy, in the convocation holden at London, in the year of our Lord 1562, according to the computation of the church of England, for the avoiding of the diverſities of opinions, and for the eſtabliſhing of conſent, concerning true religion, put forth by the Queen's authority.*" Now as this is the very title of our 39 articles, doubtleſs it will be acknowledged, that theſe are required to be ſubſcribed by the act of the 14th Car. 2.—I cannot ſee what can be ſaid againſt it; unleſs they will urge, That by the expreſſion, "*ſhall ſubſcribe the 39 articles, mentioned in the ſtatute of the 13th Eliz.* is meant, *ſhall ſubſcribe* ſuch of *the 39 articles mentioned in the ſtatute of the 13th Eliz.* as are in that ſtatutue enjoined to be ſubſcribed." But what authority, leſs than that of king, lords and commons, can make ſo important an alteration in an act of parliament? Eſpecially when there is no ground to ſuppoſe there could be any miſtake; as thoſe who draw and examine a bill, or clauſe of a bill, which is to explain or refer to another former ſtatute, muſt be ſuppoſed to have that

ſtatute

ſtatute before them; where the limiting clauſe would be in full view; particularly when the expreſſion is twice uſed in the act of uniformity.—And, in the preſent caſe, if ſuch attention was not uſed, it ſhewed that the ſtatute was in general underſtood to require ſubſcription to all the articles.—Beſides, the mention of the number in the act of uniformity, makes it clear; unleſs they will ſay, that 39 means 38 or 37, &c.—But what muſt, with the Confeſſionaliſt, put the matter beyond all doubt, is his own method of arguing, concerning the ſtatute of the 13th of Eliz. viz. The intent of the houſe.—For if the puritans could not be ſuppoſed to deſign to require ſubſcription to the diſciplinarian articles; much leſs could the parliament of 1662, be ſuppoſed to deſign to exempt any from thoſe articles.—But if our author, in the laſt cited note, had caſt a critical eye on his own ſyllogiſm, he could hardly have avoided ſeeing, that his premiſes (to uſe his own expreſſion) did not intitle him to his concluſion. For thus he argues, "*Neither heads of colleges, &c. are obliged to ſubſcribe to any other articles than the* 39 *articles, mentioned in the ſtatute of the* 13*th of Eliz.*"—He then adds, "*And the articles mentioned in the ſaid ſtatute, are thoſe which only concern, &c.*"—Then he concludes, "*Whoever requires any clergyman to ſubſcribe any other* (i. e. *the whole* 39.) *hath not the authority of any ſtatute for that practice.*"—Now to make this a good ſyllogiſm, the ſecond propoſition ought to run thus, "*And the* 39 *articles mentioned in the ſaid ſtatute, are* only *thoſe concerning the confeſſion of the true faith, and the doctrine of the Sacraments.*"—So that, as it now ſtands, the concluſion is more general than the ſecond propoſition; the con-

cluſion is concerning all the articles mentioned in the ſtatute; the ſecond propoſition only includes the doctrinal and ſacramental ones.

Let us juſt ſay a word or two to the four remarks, pref. to 2d edit. p. 11. preceding that concerning the preſent efficacy of the limiting clauſe, which we have already conſidered.—Rem. 1. Whether the lay part of the legiſlature were, abſolutely ſpeaking, as good judges as the biſhops, perhaps is not to be determined by their own opinion: and perhaps will not be determined, in the affirmative, by any impartial perſons, who reflect, that the biſhops may be ſuppoſed to have ſtudied thoſe ſubjects more.—Whether they really thought themſelves as competent judges, is not clear from Mr. P. Wentworth's anſwer, as he was only an individual, and the houſe differed from him in ſome things.—But that they muſt be allowed judges ſufficiently competent, to determine for themſelves, need not have been aſſerted; as I know none, who allow a man's conſcience to be his guide, that will deny it.—Rem. 2. No fair induction from Mr. P. Wentworth's ſentiments to thoſe of the whole legiſlature; as before.—Beſides, if *eſtabliſhed* here means *being made a part of the ſtatute law*; what biſhops ever claimed the power of making it ſo? If *eſtabliſhed* means uſed or appointed as a *rule of eccleſiaſtical diſcipline*, neither the houſe nor Mr. P. Wentworth denied it; for if ſo, they would no doubt have voted the diſciplinarian articles illegal; becauſe the confirming the reſt, and leaving theſe as they were before the paſſing the act, was no doubt a tacit acknowledgment they were not unlawful in the light they then ſtood in.—Rem. 3. If the word

right

right here means *a ſtatutable right*; I know none who claim it.—If it means *eccleſiaſtical authority*, I do not ſee (as above) that this law at all denied it.—Rem. 4. The truth of this depends upon the ſenſe of the ſtatute; and, on this head, ſomething has been ſaid above tending to cauſe a doubt of the truth of this remark.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER IV.

WE muſt next, Sir, proceed to enquire into the equitable Right of the church to require ſubſcription.—And, in the firſt place, let us ſettle two or three definitions, that we may know what we are about.

By a ſociety, I mean a number of perſons, voluntarily united, by certain rules, or mutual engagements, for mutual benefit.

By a religious ſociety, a number of perſons, united as above, for mutual advantage in religious matters.

By a religious ſociety of chriſtians, a number of perſons united, as above, for mutual advantage in the profeſſion of the chriſtian religion.

By a religious ſociety of proteſtants, a number of perſons united, as above, for mutual advantage in the profeſſion of proteſtantiſm.

Such a ſociety I look upon as a proteſtant church.—And,

Such a church I eſteem the church of England to be.

Now as the author of the Confeſſional has repeatedly aſſerted, as a proteſtant principle, that every

every man has a right to judge for himſelf, of the ſenſe of ſcripture, and the obligations he is laid under thereby;—let us ſee whither this principle will lead us.

As any private chriſtian may judge for himſelf: ſo he may communicate his ſentiments, concerning any paſſage of ſcripture, or any point of doctrine, or duty he takes himſelf to be obliged to the performance of.—He may communicate this to one, two, or as many as he pleaſes.—If theſe agree in their ſentiments, and are of opinion that it will be for mutual edification, and ſafety in the profeſſion of chriſtianity to unite in a ſociety for that purpoſe, it is lawful for them ſo to do; provided they hold no opinions injurious to others, or contrary to the laws of the civil ſociety to which they belong.—They may uſe all ſuch means, as to them ſeem proper, to preſerve pure amongſt them, what their conſciences inform them is the true chriſtian doctrine; all ſuch means being ſtill ſubject to the above reſtrictions.—Particularly, they may appoint an order of men to be public teachers.—Upon the ſame principles alſo, they may aſſign ſuch an order of men a due proviſion.—For as ſuch proviſion is to ariſe from the property of the ſociety, they may certainly diſpoſe of that property, or any part thereof, as they deem right.—And, conſequently, they may appoint what teſts of admiſſion to ſuch office to them ſhall ſeem neceſſary.——For, certainly, they who give the reward, may fix the terms on which it ſhall be obtained.—For where none is compelled to enter into the vineyard, none can complain of the conditions required for receiving the wages; and if they do not chooſe to go in on the conditions required,

they

they cannot reaſonably expect to be taken in.—If, therefore, ſuch a ſociety are of opinion, that the requiring ſubſcription to a certain form of words, is a proper ſecurity of the ſoundneſs of the principles of their teachers; they certainly have a right to require ſuch ſubſcription.—Indeed, the point ſeems entirely given up by our author, ſo far as to acknowledge the equity of requiring *ſome* ſubſcription, in pref. to 2d edit. p. 16. —And therefore I may reſt the matter on this conceſſion, on ſuppoſition, that we can make out as good a title to require ſubſcription to a larger form, as the Confeſſionaliſt produces to require ſubſcription to that he propoſes; and this we hope to do before we finiſh this undertaking.—To proceed then, if this ſociety encreaſe, and ſome men's paſſions or intereſts incline them not to ſubmit to the rules voluntarily agreed on; particularly, if they ſhould object to contribute their proportion to the miniſters proviſion, and thereby render their ſubſiſtence precarious, and ſo diſcourage worthy men from entering into the office; the ſociety may ſurely apply to the civil power to give a ſanction to their own private voluntary rules, in order to ſecure to the miniſters the reward due to their labours.—And, in this caſe, the very making a law for this purpoſe, implies a neceſſity of enjoining ſuch terms of admiſſion to their office, as the ſociety have thought neceſſary; becauſe no law can ſecure any private property, without deſcribing the perſons who are entitled to it, and fixing the qualifications or conditions to be performed to give a claim to it; and becauſe it would be unjuſt, and contrary to the end aimed at by the ſociety, in calling in the civil power, to allow any other

other terms of admiſſion to the miniſtry, than ſuch as the ſociety approve.

Now this I take to have been exactly our caſe at the reformation.—The original reformers here in England, in 1562, thought it convenient, and tending to edification, to draw up a confeſſion of faith, by which the members of this new-reformed Chriſtian ſociety, or in other words, the members of the church of England, might teſtify their religious principles to each other, and by which they might receive aſſurance of the principles of their teachers. Some perſons were pitched upon to draw up ſuch a confeſſion; and accordingly they drew it up. And, how different ſoever their ſentiments might be on ſome points, they agreed upon this form, as that by which the members of the church of England were to teſtify their faith to each other, and by which they were to try thoſe, who offered to undertake the office of teachers.—And we may, if we pleaſe, ſuppoſe the compilers of the articles to be, at the very time when theſe articles were finiſh'd, the only members of that church, whoſe confeſſion was included in theſe articles.—And then we have a confeſſion of faith, to which, I hope, the Confeſſionaliſt can have no objection, becauſe it comes up to his own idea of a lawful confeſſion; as "*having the previous conſent of all the members*;" vid. ch. II. p. 30.—This confeſſion being publiſhed, all who thought it a proper one aſſented to it, either tacitly or openly; and conſequently joined themſelves to the ſociety which made uſe of this confeſſion.—In proceſs of time, viz. in 1571, this confeſſion (at leaſt a part of it, and the reſt in 1662) was enjoined to be ſubſcribed by all miniſters (as we have

have ſeen above) as a teſt of their principles; and (in conſequence thereof) as entitling them to the profits of their benefices.—Nor can any one juſtly ſay that the civil power herein exceeds its authority, or goes beyond its province; ſince it lays no burthen on the conſcience; becauſe what is enjoined may be refuſed without any penalty.—To this I hope our author will have the leſs objection, as thoſe, for whom he claims the privilege of being "*as competent judges of theſe matters as the biſhops themſelves*," (vid. Pref. to 2d edit. p. 11.) viz. the lay part of the legiſlature of 1571 (i. e. the Puritans, as appears by our author's note d, begun p. 12, and ended p. 14.) approved both of a confeſſion of faith, and a ſubſcription to it by the miniſters, and thought the civil power had a right to enjoin ſuch ſubſcription, otherwiſe they could never have paſſed the act of the 13th of Eliz.—Thus then ſtands the caſe with regard to the clergy; and I ſhould hope, the equitable Right to require ſubſcription is ſufficiently made out.—The right of private judgment cannot be ſaid to be infringed in the leaſt hereby; becauſe ſubſcription is only required as a condition of admiſſion into the miniſtry; and every one may examine the contents of the articles, and compare them with the ſcripture if he pleaſes; and if he cannot reconcile them with the ſcriptures, he is under no obligation to ſubſcribe, nor does the law inflict any puniſhment on him for refuſing.—Yes, ſays our author, p. 45, note.—'Tis a great puniſhment to be excluded from the emoluments of the miniſtry; for "*many an uſeful, conſcientious* man, *after having ſpent his time and his fortune among doctors and profeſſors, in fitting himſelf for the miniſtry, finds in the*

the twenty-third year of his life, ſuch conditions preſcribed, as he cannot in conſcience comply with, and that he is reduced to the unhappy dilemma of ſubſcribing at all adventures, *or* ſtarving."—And adds ſome ſarcaſtic wit concerning the purchaſe of a ſpade and pick-ax, and working upon the turnpikes. Let us examine this plea ſeriouſly, and ſee whether it have ſtrength enough to overbalance the right of requiring ſubſcriptions.

Is there only one proteſtant church that wants miniſters?—If there are more, why may not the diſtreſſed, uſeful and conſcientious man try to get admiſſion into ſome of them?—But perhaps he may be one of thoſe "*honeſt and ſenſible chriſtians*," mentioned in p. 32: whoſe "*careful and diligent ſearch into the ſcriptures*" may be the occaſion of excluding him from "*the communion of every church, which has an eſtabliſhed confeſſion of faith.*"—If this is really the caſe, I cannot help thinking, (and I fancy many will be of the ſame opinion) that ſuch a man's ſentiments muſt be ſomething ſo ſingular, that it would be hard to ſatisfy him with any terms of communion that could be deviſed, eſpecially as the emoluments he complains of being excluded from, could only be ſecured to him by law, and that law (as we have obſerved above) muſt aſcertain what qualifications ſhould entitle him to it, which, if they have reſpect to his principles, (as one would think they ought in a religious teacher) is much like eſtabliſhing a confeſſion.—But further is there no other way of life, without bodily labour, in which his learning can profit him, except that of a religious teacher?—If there is, he need not ſtarve;—If not, can it be thought reaſonable, that, to ſave him from bodily labour, an eſtabliſhment, wherein the members are of opinion

they find religious edification, and which they think neceſſary for preſerving purity of religion, ſhould be broke up, and the members deprived of the benefits they enjoy under it?—But further, if this argument be good againſt the right of eſtabliſhing a confeſſion, I am afraid any Jacobite might urge it full as ſtrongly againſt the oaths of allegiance, &c. which exclude him from civil offices; nay worſe, any man, who in his 23d year ſhould diſlike the Bible, might juſt have as good a plea; and muſt ſuch an one, I beg leave to aſk our author, be admitted as a teacher? Nor let it be ſaid that this permiſmiſſion to a diſſatisfied member to go into another church is giving up the exiſtence of ſchiſm. For though I have ſaid that we lay no obligation of conformity on thoſe who diſlike our eſtabliſhment; yet if any of our members ſeparate, without ſufficient cauſe (which conſtitutes ſchiſm) to their own conſciences, and their own maſter, they muſt anſwer for ſuch a ſeparation.—Our moderation towards them does not diminiſh their crime.

The caſe of the laity in general, is different from that of the clergy. The articles, as we have ſaid above are offered to them, as a criterion, or evidence, by which the members of the church of England, teſtify to each other, what church they hold communion with. To theſe therefore any one may conſent or not, as he pleaſes. And thoſe who openly avow an agreement or conſent, in doctrine and worſhip, are undoubtedly guilty of prevarication, if they, at that time, diſſent. Thoſe who only join in the outward form of worſhip, and are ſilent as to their ſentiments, are ſuppos'd, by ſuch outward conformity, tacitly to agree in the doctrines they know

to

to be maintain'd, by that church of which they appear to be members, or at leaſt in the principal of them. And even thoſe, who publickly declare their diſſent, in ſome points, are ſeldom or never refuſed the benefit of communion; provided they remain peaceable and quiet, and are not profligate in their lives, or profane in their avow'd ſentiments. No layman therefore, can complain of any injury done them, by the eſtabliſhment of a confeſſion; unleſs they will prove that for thoſe who agree in ſentiments, to declare their agreement to each other, is an infringement of the liberty of thoſe who think differently; and if ſo, I am afraid the Confeſſionaliſt and his friends wou'd find it hard to prove, that they are not verily guilty of this infringement, in a very great degree. Had the firſt reformers chiefly pleaded againſt ſuch teſts as excluded them from the temporal emoluments of of the miniſtry, they might have exclaimed as loudly as they pleas'd, againſt the ſecularity of the popiſh clergy, without ever convincing impartial perſons, that they had not a longing wiſh to partake the ſpoils. But what they pleaded for, was permiſſion to profeſs their opinions, not pernicious to ſociety, in peace; and to teach men the true doctrine of the goſpel.—They did not accuſe the papiſts of doing any thing amiſs in eſtabliſhing or defending by lawful methods, ſuch opinions as they were perſuaded were right; and ſo long as they thought them ſo; but they endeavoured to open their eyes, and convince them from reaſon and ſcripture, that their opinions were many of them very wrong, and inconſiſtent with chriſtianity; and that their terms of communion were ſuch as they could not lawfully join in; and then they rightly infered, that

the eſtabliſhment which maintained ſuch wrong opinions, and required ſuch unlawful compliances, ought to be reformed.—But ſtill they never pleaded for deſtroying the whole edifice; but only for amending the decayed or faulty parts.—And conſequently their whole artillery was directed againſt particular parts, not againſt the foundation as a church.—The oppoſers, therefore, of our eſtabliſhment, ought to prove that we maintain falſe doctrines, or enjoin unlawful ceremonies; and then they would rightly infer, that it ought to be altered.—But ſtill we who remain unconvinced by all that our author, or any other diſſenter from our eſtabliſhment has ſaid againſt it's lawfulneſs, may conſcientiouſly adhere to the old ſyſtem.—And herein, I think, I have the conſent of our author; for p. 378, we have the following generous conceſſion; "*If there are any of this claſs* [*viz. candidates for the miniſtry*] *weak enough to be offended with the removal of this barrier of orthodoxy*; (*viz. ſubſcription*;) *why let them be gratified too.*"—But as to the conceſſion itſelf, ſurely our author either muſt not have conſidered the conſequence of ſuch a propoſal, or he muſt think thoſe he makes this conceſſion to *weak* indeed.—How can ſuch as think it a barrier of orthodoxy, and would be offended by the removal of it, be gratified, unleſs the barrier ſtill continue? But how can it continue, if ſome are allowed not to ſubſcribe, and yet admitted to the miniſtry?—Can any thing be called a barrier which is to obſtruct nobody?—Thus, I think, from this vain attempt at a compromiſe, the equity of requiring ſubſcription is acknowledged; ſince our author thinks it equitable to gratify thoſe who think ſuch a barrier neceſſary. I am, Sir, &c.

LET-

LETTER V.

LET us now, Sir, conſider, whether it is contrary to ſcripture, and apoſtolical practice, to eſtabliſh a confeſſion of faith; or whether we have not authority from thence, either in expreſs terms, or by juſt conſequence, ſo to do?

Every chriſtian will undoubtedly allow, that from every motive of duty, we ought all to maintain the purity of the goſpel-doctrine, as much as in us lies.—Otherwiſe, why all theſe conteſts on all ſides, to root out all the corruptions ſaid to be crept into it? If then we are to maintain the profeſſion of chriſtianity in its utmoſt purity, as far as we are able; it muſt be lawful for us, nay, incumbent on us, to uſe ſuch means as, according to the beſt of our judgment, appear lawful and neceſſary to this end. Now, in order to maintain and defend the true goſpel-doctrine, we muſt examine the ſcriptures, and ſee what they teach us; and we muſt "*hold faſt*" the right doctrine, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be drove from the principles of our holy religion, i. e. what appears to us the true ſenſe of ſcripture, by any artifices whatever.—This is the expreſs command of St. Paul, 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

Further St. Paul ſays, Gal. i. 8.—"*Though an* "*angel from heaven preach any other goſpel, than* "*that which we have preached unto you, let him be* "*accurſed*;" and alſo we are commanded "*not* "*to add to*," or "*take away from what is taught* "*in ſcripture.*"—Now, though theſe expreſſions are what the objectors to confeſſions urge, as ar-

guments of the unlawfulneſs thereof; they appear to me in a quite contrary light.—I readily own they are concluſive againſt eſtabliſhing any thing, as an article of faith, except what is required in ſcripture, by expreſs declaration, or juſt inference.—But they appear to me ſo far from prohibiting explications of ſcripture, that I cannot ſee how theſe, and ſuch like commands, can be complied with, without having ſome ſettled form, by which doctrines are to be examined; that is to ſay, by which their agreement with ſcripture may be examined.—For though, at firſt, one might be apt to think, that it would be moſt natural to apply to ſcripture, and compare the doctrine therewith; yet, when we conſider, that all parties pretend to ſcripture authority; there muſt appear to be no way of enquiring into the validity of the particular arguments, by which each ſide maintains it's ſentiments, but either by having ſome ſummary of the principal articles of our faith, i e. ſome abſtract of ſcripture; or by comparing every new doctrine, with every paſſage of ſcripture, which can poſſibly have any reference to it; ſince a doctrine may appear agreeable to one, or two paſſages, conſidered ſingly, which may differ from the general tenor of ſcripture; and this latter method is both next to impoſſible; and alſo very unneceſſary; as the uſe of a judicious formulary is equally ſafe.—Becauſe, when we have once ſatisfied ourſelves, that our formulary contains a true ſummary of ſcripture-doctrine (which all ought to do, who aſſent to it) we may as ſafely truſt to that, as to the reſult of our enquiries in any particular diſpute.—Our general belief, of the truth of ſuch a formulary, being as good a ground of judging of any

doctrine,

doctrine, as our particular diſquiſition; ſuppoſing, as above, that our general aſſent is well founded.

Again, there are ſome expreſſions in the apoſtolic writings, which, as the learned and worthy Biſhop Burnet expreſſes it, "*do import a ſtandard, or fixed formularly, by which all doctrines were to be examined.*"—As Rom. vi. 17.—1 Tim. iv. 6. 1 Tim. vi. 3.—2 Tim. i. 13. And hence his lordſhip argues, "*That there was a form ſettled very early in moſt churches.—This*, ſays he, *in one place St. Paul calls*, "the form of doctrine that was delivered;" *in another place*, "the form of ſound words;" *which thoſe, who were fixed by the apoſtles in particular churches, had received from them.—Theſe words of his do import a* ſtandard, *or fixed* formulary, *by which all doctrines were to be examined.*"—P. 2. of his introduction; as quoted in the Confeſſional, p. 91.—And, I believe, every one who is not prejudiced againſt our eſtabliſhment, will agree with the biſhop, that there is ſufficient proof of his aſſertion; that there was a formulary ſettled early in moſt churches; and that St. Paul's manner of expreſſion implies a ſtandard, or fix'd formulary.—And, conſequently, that the governors of our church have apoſtolic example, for requiring ſubſcription to an eſtabliſhed confeſſion.—But our author cannot give up ſo deciſive a point; and therefore he tells us, that, "*When a capable and unprejudiced reader conſiders the variety of expreſſions in theſe ſeveral paſſages* [viz. thoſe referred to by the biſhop, as proving his aſſertion] *he will probably be inclined to think, that a fixed formulary of doctrine, is the laſt thing a plain man would look for in them.*"—Now, on other occaſions,

caſions, when he thinks any expreſſion that has dropped from the biſhop, is at all in favour of his own ſcheme, he is ready enough to allow him to be *capable and unprejudiced*; and really I cannot ſee any reaſon to deny him the ſame character in the preſent inſtance; unleſs it be, becauſe his ſentiments are contrary to thoſe of our author.—However, to ſhew that theſe expreſſions do not mean a fixed Formulary, we are told, p. 91.—That "*a fixed Formulary ſhould have a fixed title.*" To which I only anſwer, that the contents of a book may remain the very ſame, though the title-page ſhould be altered every edition; and if the different title pages are the ſame in ſenſe, they may all be equally proper too.—Beſides, when the title remains the ſame, it may be ſpoke of in different terms, by different perſons, and yet they all mean the ſame thing; as one may ſpeak of "*the articles of the church of England*;" another may call them "*our articles*;" another, "*Q. Elizabeth's articles*;" another, "*the articles of* 1571," and "*the* 39 *articles*;" and yet no one would doubt, but they were all ſpeaking of the ſame fixed Formulary.—Our author ſays, "*To enter into a juſt criticiſm would be tedious and unneceſſary.*"—I cannot ſay but it appears to me to have been very neceſſary; when he knows that the ſenſe which he denies, is what his adverſaries maintain; and that which he maintains, he was aſſured they would deny.—"*Suffice it*, ſays he, *to obſerve, after very competent judges, that* τυποι διδαχης, *and* ὑποτυπωσις των ὑγιαινοντων λογων *appear to refer rather to the* exemplification *of the chriſtian doctrine in the* practice *of pious believers, than to any* form *of words.*"—If we are not to be indulged with any "*juſt criticiſm*," but required to admit the

the ſenſe of competent judges, (which, by the bye, appears not quite conſiſtent with the author's plea for private judgment) I really think we ſhould have known who theſe competent judges are; as alſo their reaſons for this interpretation; becauſe it is highly probable, from ſome authorities urged by our author, that we might think them by no means ſuch *competent*, *capable*, or even *unprejudiced* judges as either the Biſhop, or many others, whoſe ſentiments of the ſenſe of theſe paſſages are the ſame as his Lordſhip's; ſince, if he had his prejudices, (as who is entirely without them) they certainly did not biaſs him to exalt church authority too high; and conſequently, he is, in this caſe, a fair evidence at leaſt.—Our author, a little after the laſt quotation adds, "*And* τυπος *points out the* practical exemplification *of the doctrine here.*"—That we may not be miſled by miſtaken expreſſions, nor charge any one with what they have not aſſerted, let us determine, with as much preciſion as poſſible, the true ſignification of theſe expreſſions.—The *exemplification in practice*, or the *practical exemplification* of the doctrine, I take to mean, a practice regulated by the doctrine of the goſpel; which is, therefore, an exemplification of the doctrine; juſt as any performance exhibited in conformity to certain rules, is an exemplification of thoſe rules. —I think we cannot be miſtaken in this ſenſe; becauſe it ſeems neceſſary ſo to take it, in order to find any oppoſition between our author's and the biſhop's ſenſe of τυπος. And in this ſenſe indeed, the oppoſition is very ſtrong.—For, according to this, in our author's ſenſe (to uſe an allowable illuſtration) τυπος may be conſidered as a line or ſentence, copied from a pattern or form; and,

and, in his lordſhip's ſenſe, as well as that of other defenders of our confeſſion, it may be conſidered as, the pattern or form, from which that line or ſentence is copied.—To prove, or however to explain his aſſertion, our author ſays, p. 92. "*The doctrine is one thing, and the type of the doctrine another.—The doctrine is, and muſt be expreſſed by, and conſequently contained in ſome* form *of words.—But the* type *of that* form *muſt be ſomewhat different from the form itſelf.*"—It appears to me, as if in the laſt of theſe three ſentences our author intended to draw a concluſion aſſerted in the firſt, and proved in the ſecond.—But if ſo, there is manifeſtly a fallacy; as the aſſertion in the firſt, and the concluſion in the laſt, refer to different ſubjects, viz. one to *the type of the doctrine*, and the other to *the type of the form*; or, *the type of the form of words*.—Which two laſt expreſſions, indeed, I own I cannot very well underſtand.—However, to paſs by this difficulty at the preſent; let us conſider what may be ſaid to eſtabliſh his lordſhip's ſenſe of τυπος and ὑποτυπωσις.—And perhaps our author will guide us to ſufficient authority, whom himſelf will allow to be competent judges.—He ſends us to Grotius, on Rom. vi. 17.—who there tranſlates εις τυπον, *in eam formam*; and in the ſame note refers us to Heb. viii. 5.—for a like ſenſe of κατα τυπον; which he tranſlates, *ſecundum exemplar*; and from inſpection of the paſſage it is evident, that by *exemplar*, he means, a form or pattern, by or according to which ſomething was to be made. And ſince this excellent commentator is brought as a lawful witneſs, we ſhall beg leave further to examine him concerning the ſenſe of ὑποτύπωσις, 2 Tim. i. 13.—Which, he agrees with our author,

thor, is equivalent to τυπος; and tranſlates it *exemplar*; adding, *ſed hic intellige exemplar in animo fixum, quod* ιδεαν [*ideam*] *Platonici vocant.*—We are alſo referred, by our author, to 1 Tim. i. 16. And told, that there the word ſignifies, "*a pattern*;"—he adds indeed, "*which is the ſame thing as an example.*"—But we muſt firſt obſerve, that, by adding this explanation, he appears conſcious this is not the moſt obvious ſenſe of the word "*Pattern.*"—And we muſt further deſire it may be remembered, that, the word *example*, in our language, is ambiguous, and ſignifies (to uſe our former illuſtration) either a line or ſentence, copied from a pattern or form, or the pattern or form itſelf from which ſuch line or ſentence is copied.—We muſt likewiſe obſerve, that when the word *example* is uſed as ſynonymous to *pattern*, it is plainly taken in the latter ſenſe; when as ſynonymous to *exemplification*, it is then, as plainly, uſed in the former ſenſe.—Conſequently as our author acknowledges, That ὑποτυπωσις ſignifies *an example*, as ſynonymous to *pattern*; he muſt acknowledge it cannot be rendered *example*, as ſynonymous to *exemplification.*—And, according to his own conceſſion, τυπος, and ὑποτυπωσις muſt have the ſame ſenſe.—But further ſtill, τυπος retains the ſame ſenſe, viz. that of a *pattern* or *form* to be imitated; not an *imitation* or *exemplification* of a *pattern* or *form*, even when it is applied to practice; as our former evidence, Grotius, teſtifies in his annotation on Tit. ii. 7.—From whence he alſo refers us to Philip iii. 17.—1 Theſſ. i. 7.—2 Theſſ. iii. 9.—1 Pet. v. 3.

I cannot, now, but take notice of the peculiarity of the expreſſion above-mentioned; where our

our author ſays, "*The* type *of the* form, *muſt be ſomething different from the* form *itſelf.*"— Becauſe, having now, I hope, proved that τύπος διδαχης ſignifies a form of doctrine; and conſequently, that *type* and *form* are here ſynonymous terms, one cannot help thinking the expreſſion wants reforming, as would eaſily appear, if either of theſe ſynonymous words were put for the other, the reſt of the ſentence remaining as it is.—And ſtill more to evince the certainty that theſe are ſynonymous terms, or at leaſt equally juſt tranſlations of τυπος; I muſt deſire our authors note *o.* p. 92. may be obſerved;—where, on the authority of Hen. Stephens, he tranſlates that word both *typus* and *forma.*—One cannot well paſs by the latter part of the ſame note; where he tells us, "τυπος *is the literal copy of Lyſias's epiſtle to Felix, not the ſum or abridgment of it.*"—From this aſſertion I muſt beg leave to diſſent.—Both becauſe Grotius in loc. tranſlates it, not, *his verbis*, but, *hoc tenore*; and Beza, *ſummam, aut compendium*; and our own tranſlators have it, *after this manner*; neither of which appear to me applicable to any thing, but a "*Sum or abridgement.*"—And beſides, I cannot think St. Luke was provided with a literal copy of this letter; or if he was, would think it of any importance to copy it exactly into his hiſtory.—As to the form of addreſs and concluſion, one cannot think that St. Luke could be ignorant of ſo common a thing; and conſequently would naturally uſe it, as he choſe to expreſs himſelf in the epiſtolary form.

In the next paragraph we are told, That "*the literal Engliſh of* ὑγιαινοντες λογοι, *is* healing *or* ſalutary words."—Whereas, I take it, ὑγιαινω is a verb neuter; and conſequently the participle here uſed

uſed muſt mean *ſound* or *wholeſome* words, rather than *healing* or *ſalutary* words; (if the ſenſe is not much the ſame in this place;) ſince the verb active is ὑγιαζω.—If our author will pleaſe to conſult Tit. i. 13.—ii. 2. he will, I believe, allow, That in thoſe places, the ſenſe muſt be neutral.—But not to inſiſt longer on this point, what would our author gain, were we to allow him his own ſenſe of theſe words? ſince it would ſtill remain to be enquired, Whether the expreſſion is to be underſtood of the ſcripture, or of ſome other formulary of doctrine?—For thoſe who maintain, That "*a form of* ſound *or* wholeſome *words*," means ſuch a formulary, would as eaſily maintain, that "*a form of* healing *or* ſalutary *words*" means the ſame thing.—Becauſe, by ſuch, the formulary is ſuppoſed to conduce to the health of the ſouls of thoſe who uſe it.—We are then aſked, where this formulary is to be found?—And readily anſwer, that, at preſent, we think the beſt is contained in the 39 articles.—Which we apprehend, we have good reaſon to believe are formed for the ſame general ends, and upon the ſame chriſtian principles, as thoſe ſhort abſtracts of the chriſtian faith, which, we are perſuaded, were in uſe when St. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus.—Now, on the other hand, our author is of opinion, That "this form (*this* τύποι *and* ὑποτύπωσις *however*) of healing words, *is in the ſcriptures, ſometimes, perhaps, abridged and comprehended in ſome ſhort ſummaries, which occur in Paul's epiſtles to Timothy and Titus.*"—For though the author only expreſsly ſays, "*The healing words are there to be found*," no doubt he means the τύπος and ὑποτύπωσις; becauſe otherwiſe he would ſhift the queſtion.—For none will deny

ſurely that there are *healing words* in the ſcriptures. —The enquiry is, whether what is meant by the τύπος and ὑποτύπωσις των ὑγιαινοντων λογων is to be found there, or ſought in ſome formulary?—I muſt ſuppoſe, therefore, that our author acknowleges, this τύπος and ὑποτύπωσις, (whatever it means) is to be found in the ſcriptures; and to uſe his own caveat, on another occaſion, I will not ſuppoſe "*the* perhaps *is intended as a drawback in caſe of need*."—Now from hence, I would obſerve, that the ſenſe our author has given of theſe words above, cannot poſſibly be right; if this τύπος, &c. are to be found in ſcripture; becauſe, *the exemplification of the chriſtian doctrine in practice*, or, *the practical exemplification of the doctrine*, is ſurely not to be found in ſcripture.—Our author muſt, therefore, either give up his ſenſe of theſe words; or retract his aſſertion, That they are to be found in the ſcriptures, i. e. what is meant by them.—We may obſerve alſo, that our author's ſenſe of τύπος cannot be juſt; becauſe then it could refer only to the moral or practical doctrines; as none elſe can be exemplified in practice.

But further, the very nature, and deſign of a formulary, or confeſſion of faith, ſhow plainly that no ſuch thing can be found in ſcripture.—Becauſe, what we mean by ſuch a formulary, is, a ſhort abridgement of what we think is contain'd in the ſcriptures; or a ſhort explication of what we think the ſcriptures teach and require of us.—And certainly no one would ever think of ſeeking for an abridgment of a book, in the book itſelf; neither wou'd one expect to find an explication of a book expreſs'd in the ſame words as the book itſelf.—And if our author had conſi-

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der'd confeſſions in this light, he muſt have too much ſenſe to queſtion whether it cou'd be any more unlawful for chriſtians to make abridgments, or explications of ſcripture, than for a reader of any uſeful and inſtructive book, to make a common-place book, or write down, what he ſuppoſes the ſenſe of an author, and ſhow it to another.—On the contrary, he ſeems to have conſidered "*Con-* "*feſſions, as us'd inſtead of, and ſet up as equal in* "*authority to the ſcriptures*;" whereas nothing can be more evident, than that they are only uſed as a kind of ſynopſis, referring to the ſcriptures; and that their whole authority depends upon their ſuppoſed conformity to the ſcriptures.—And, for this reaſon, I am amaz'd that any ſenſible man can have a doubt, concerning the lawfulneſs of confeſſions in general;—ſince the only queſtion that it ſeems poſſible to raiſe concerning them, is, whether they are fair and juſt abridgments, or Explications of ſcripture, or not?—Or, in other words, as we ſaid above, the only reaſonable way to attack confeſſions, is to attack particular parts of them.

But to proceed, from the above account of the nature and deſign of formularies, I think, we may ſay ſomething alſo to our author's aſſertion, that "*the moment you admit of variations, not on-* "*ly the* idea *of a* fix'd formulary, *but even the* uſe "*of* any *formulary, as a* ſtandard *or* teſt *of* all *doc-* "*trines immediately vaniſhes away.*"—*p.* 94—Let us here uſe preciſion.—Does the author mean. that where a certain formulary is fix'd on as a teſt, and ſo long as it continues ſo fix'd, it admits of no variation?—I cannot think this; becauſe this wou'd be only an identical propoſition, *viz.* that what continues the ſame is not varied.

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—Does he then mean, that when a formulary is once fix'd in any church, it cannot after be alter-ed as occaſion may require?—I cannot think this neither; becauſe, any thing enacted by due authority, may very properly be call'd a fix'd law; and yet the ſame authority may alter it, and particularly, it is an acknowleged proteſtant prin-ciple, that we may alter our formulary, when we ſee occaſion; and in Queen *Elizabeth*'s time it was actually done.—Does he then mean that if it be admitted, that two churches may have diffe-rent formularies, neither of them can properly be call'd a *fixed* formulary?—This, I apprehend, is his real meaning.—And, I hope, it will be thought, that this aſſertion is ſufficiently diſpro-ved, when we recollect, that a formulary is on-ly deſign'd, as an abridgment, or explication of what they who uſe it, are perſuaded is deliver'd or commanded in ſcripture.—For ſince this is the end aim'd at, one church may juſtly eſtabliſh a different formulary, from another's, and yet both be fix'd formularies.—Becauſe one church may deſignedly take in more or fewer particulars than another; and yet, both take in all they think neceſſary; or they may even aſſert contra-ry doctrines; and yet, if they are indeed perſuad-ed, that thoſe doctrines are really contain'd in ſcripture, and alſo neceſſary to be expreſſed in their formulary, they may each of them proper-ly call their own a *fixed formulary*, or *teſt of* ALL *doctrines*; (i. e. of all doctrines neceſſary to be ex-preſſed in their formulary;) becauſe to all who think it a true, and ſufficiently comprehenſive formula-ry, it certainly is ſo.--The uſe of ſuch formularies, we are to conſider hereafter.—But if our author means, that ſuch as are call'd *fix'd formularies*, are ſet up as fix'd and infallible teſts of *all* doctrines what-

ſoever; and to which all muſt aſſent, on pain of loſing all goſpel benefits; I know no proteſtant church, nor ſingle proteſtant, who defends them in that ſenſe; but only as containing a confeſſion of the chief Articles of their belief who uſe them.—

We next naturally come to conſider our author's enquiry, whether ſuch forms were actually made uſe of by the apoſtles, and from them delivered to their ſucceſſors?—And his aſſertion, *p.* 96. that "*if there had been any ſuch depoſitum* "*left with the biſhop*, &c. *it is next to impoſſible*, "*that no remains of them are to be diſcovered to* "*this hour.*"—

That they really did themſelves uſe, and alſo deliver to their ſucceſſors ſuch forms, we think very evident from thoſe paſſages of ſcripture already conſider'd, as well as ſome others, to be examin'd by and by. The friends of the Confeſſional think otherwiſe; and whoſe ſentiments are juſteſt, the attentive, judicious, and unprejudic'd muſt determine. But be that determination what it will; the Confeſſionaliſt, and his friends cannot deny, that it is both lawful *for*, and incumbent *on* us, to uſe confeſſions, who think we have apoſtolical authority and example for ſo doing; unleſs they will give up their boaſted priviledge of private judgment; and oblige us to put our conſciences under their direction. —That no ſuch ancient depoſitum is now to be met with, appears to me very natural, nay I ſhou'd think it ſtrange if there were.—For in the firſt place, as theſe, we ſuppoſe, were rather human that divine inſtitutions, (tho' the apoſtles might be their authors,) it was not neceſſary that they ſhou'd be preſerv'd with the ſame care as the di-

vine writings.—And again, as they are ſuppoſed to have been ſubject to ſuch variations as the caſes and ſituations of particular churches demanded; p. 96.—for the ſame reaſons they muſt be ſubject to ſuch variations as the different caſes and ſituations of the ſame church, at different times, demanded.—And therefore it not only became unneceſſary, to preſerve the old temporary forms, when their uſe was ſuperſeded by new ones; but it was a piece of prudence to prevent their appearing any more; as they wou'd only afford matter of diſpute, and obſtruct the general uſe of the new ones.—

To produce another paſſage or two of ſcripture, which we think authoriſes the eſtabliſhment of confeſſions of faith; let us conſider, 1 Cor. 14. 26. "*Let all things be done to edify-*" *ing.*"—And *v.* 40. "*Let all things be done de-*" *cently and in order.*"--Theſe texts I think, clearly both ſuppoſe church-governors and a formulary.—For to what end are theſe directions given, if none are authoriz'd to put them in practice? And it cannot be ſuppoſed they are given to all chriſtians in general; becauſe then every one might follow his own private notions of edification.—But this was what created the very confuſion, the apoſtle had been reproving the Corinthians for, and teaching them to avoid.—It is therefore evident, that this direction is for church governors; whoſe authority he had no occaſion to eſtabliſh here, as being no doubt, allowed by thoſe he was writing to.—Now how church governors can exerciſe their authority, without having ſome eſtabliſhed formulary, I cannot ſee, any more than how any civil governor can exerciſe

exerciſe his authority, without laws, but this we may more fully conſider hereafter.—If it be ſaid, that theſe directions only reſpect public worſhip; we ſhall I hope, by and by, ſee ſo cloſe a connexion between confeſſions of faith, and public worſhip, as will make that diſtinction appear uſeleſs.—Again, let us conſider the meaning of τὰ λείποντα, *Tit.* 15.—Whether it refers not to the church governors authority in indifferent things?—Alſo let us duely weigh, *v.* 9. of the ſame chapter.—Let us reflect on the directions given to Titus, to examine into the qualifications of thoſe he ordain'd, or conſecrated preſbyters or biſhops, and the charge given to the biſhops how to conduct themſelves; and particularly to "*withſtand gain-ſayers*", and "*to ſtop their mouths*". Let us alſo conſider the inſtructions given to Timothy, concerning the choice and examination of biſhops and preſbyters, as well as other particulars of church diſcipline, in the 3d. and 5th. chapters of St. Paul's firſt epiſtle to him. And I think any unprejudiced chriſtian muſt allow, that the apoſtles and their ſucceſſors uſſed a formulary; that they appointed church governors; and that theſe were to appoint ſucceſſors, for future times, with neceſſary power and authority. I think it will alſo hence appear, that, as theſe church governors were to "*withſtand gain-*" "*ſayers,*" they muſt declare corruptions of doctrine, to be corruptions.—And for that purpoſe muſt ſurely have eſtabliſhed confeſſions of faith, unleſs they were each to determine, what was corruptions by their own private judgment, and others to be concluded thereby, which I think our author would not allow.—If it be ſaid that Timothy and Titus were ſo eminently endued

with power, by the Holy Ghoſt, that ſuch a power might ſafely be entruſted to them: we anſwer, they were not apoſtles; and conſequently not ſo highly, tho' highly to be honoured.—But what then will they ſay as to their ſucceſſors?—Perhaps that they had a larger ſhare of the aſſiſtance of the holy ſpirit, than the church governors of this day.—Be it ſo; for they needed it.—But if the preſent church governors are ſincere, in the execution of their office, will they not have what is ſufficient aſſiſtance?--As *Matt.* xxviii. 20. intimates.—Unleſs church-governors are excluded from this promiſe.—

Upon the whole then, I hope, it has been ſufficiently prov'd, that proteſtants in general, and we of the church of *England* in particular, have not only a legal and equitable right, but alſo ſcriptural authority, and apoſtolical example for eſtabliſhing a *fixed formulary*, for the uſe of the laity, to teſtify their opinions to each other; and alſo for requiring ſubſcription to that formulary, as a teſt of the ſoundneſs of the principles of thoſe who apply for admiſſion into the miniſtry. —Whether ſuch a ſhort and general form as is recommended towards the concluſion of the Confeſſional be ſufficient, may be conſider'd hereafter; at preſent it may ſuffice to ſay, that the church of *England* ſuppoſes it not ſufficient; and therefore, from the above principles, has a right to require ſubſcription to a larger form.—I know it is urg'd, that ſome worthy men, of our own church, have acknowlegad, that it might be allowable to alter ſome things in our eſtabliſhment. —But let it be remembered, that ſuch conceſſions, could only be intended, as acknowledgements that ſome things, of leſſer moment, might lawfully

lawfully be given up, for the ſake of weak Brethren; ſo far as not to injure the eſſentials of the eſtabliſhment, but they ought, by no means, to be conſtrued to extend ſo far as to mean, that theſe worthy men either thought the eſtabliſhment itſelf in general, or the retaining thoſe things in particular, unlawful.—And for this evident reaſon; becauſe notwithſtanding thoſe things were retain'd, they themſelves forſook not our communion. And this evinces how neceſſary it is to be on our guard, when even an inſtance of moderation, at one time, is converted into an argument againſt us at another.—But be the conceſſions of particular men as large as they will, we can only ſay as biſhop *Andrews* ſaid to his brother *Neale* (according to our author's quotation;) "*That they bind themſelves.*"—But it is time, to put an end to this tedious epiſtle, from, Sir, &c.

LETTER VI.

LET us now, Sir, if you pleaſe, conſider ſome particular paſſages in our author, concerning the right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions. Our author ſays, pref. to 1ſt. *Edit.* p. 13.— "*The whole (as it ſeems to me at leaſt,) would turn upon the true anſwer to this ſingle queſtion, whether certain particulars, which are equally prov'd to want reformation among proteſtants, have not as ill an effect upon a proteſtant people, while they continue unreformed, as the miſtake of a falſe ſaint for a true one, has upon a papiſt, who believes ſaint-worſhip to be an indiſpenſable duty?*"—Anſwer.—Perhaps thoſe, who continue theſe

particulars, are not ſatisfied they want reformation; in which caſe they are not blameable for adhering to them.—Or if they are convinc'd, they may eſteem them matters of ſo little conſequence, as not to be worth the hazard of an alteration; in which caſe they are certainly right in acting to the beſt of their judgment.—In all caſes, if the church-governors are convinc'd any particulars cannot lawfully be maintained, I know no proteſtant will defend them in maintaining ſuch things; but if they are perſuaded, in their own minds, that any particulars ought to be adhered to, for the good of religion, every one, who thinks a man ought, upon due conſideration, to obey the dictates of his conſcience, muſt applaud them.—For this reaſon, ſuch general queſtions, as this, are of no force; all their efficacy muſt depend upon the proof of particulars.—

After the above quotation, follows what I muſt needs call uncandid ſuggeſtions, that all who defend our eſtabliſhment, do it meerly out of intereſt.—Which, I think, ſeems to merit no particular anſwer; ſince the matter only depends upon conjecture; and perhaps, if we were deſirous to recriminate, we might with much more probability, bring the ſame charge, as well as the love of ſingularity againſt our adverſaries. —The reſt of this preface, to the 23d page, goes on, in pretty much the ſame delatory ſtrain. —Which, as it all goes upon the ſuppoſition, either that the eſtabliſhing a confeſſion of faith, is in general unlawful; or that, at leaſt, many particulars in our eſtabliſhment ought to be condemned; will all ſtand or fall, according as thoſe two queſtions are decided.—Now the general right, I hope, appears well founded, and as

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to particular objections; when we hear them, we may judge of them.

The next ſixteen pages are filled with a detail of ſome ſteps that have been taken towards a new model of our eſtabliſhment, ſince the ſtatute of the 13th of Eliz. pretty much in the ſame ſtyle as the foregoing; but I omit any minute enquiry into particulars, as being beſide our preſent purpoſe, which is only to enquire concerning the lawfulneſs of an eſtabliſhment in general, and our own right to require ſubſcriptions of our own miniſters; not to enter into any diſpute about any of the particulars thereof, it being all along to be ſuppoſed in our queſtion, that they, who require any ſubſcription, are fully perſuaded, that the particulars are defenſible.—So that all which is thrown out here againſt thoſe, whoſoever they were, who prevented any of thoſe attempts from ſucceeding, is nothing to the preſent purpoſe.—Becauſe, if they were convinced in their own conſciences, that the preſervation of the old ſyſtem was more for the ſecurity of true religion, than the admitting the propoſed alterations, they certainly acted like true chriſtians; if otherwiſe, I do not defend them.—But then who ſhall convict them?—If the Confeſſionaliſt had ſuppoſed they acted rather from good motives than bad, it had certainly been more charitable.—Whereas one cannot but have frequent occaſion to obſerve, that the evidence he brings to ſupport his accuſation is that of rigid diſſenters, and thoſe who have happened to be on the looſing ſide; and whether ſuch be good evidence againſt the jury which gave a verdict in their disfavour, I think admits not of a doubt.—However, our author himſelf, p. 31,

produces a paſſage from biſhop Burnet, aſſerting, that "*the majority of the houſe of commons defeated the attempt*, 1668;" which ſeems plainly to ſhow, that not only clergy, but alſo the majority of the laymen, were unwilling to give up what the diſſenters required; and therefore ought to ſtop the mouths of thoſe who lay the fault (if it was one) entirely on the clergy.—And ſo conſcious was our author of the force of this argument, that he immediately tells us, "*the majority of the houſe was* poſſeſſed *with theſe ſentiments, by Ward, biſhop of Saliſbury.*"—I ſay nothing of the impoſſibility of one biſhop's making ſo large a number of men, of that rank, vote againſt their own conviction; ſince 'tis enough to remark, that the evidence here produced is Calamy, whoſe authority only two pages further our author allows us to except againſt.—And how can one paſs by, without notice, our author's ſtrictures on the ſaid biſhop of Saliſbury, p. 32. for requiring Dr. D. Whitby to make a retractation; when two of the obnoxious propoſitions are produced, and appear to ſtrike ſo eſſentially at the root of all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment?—What could a biſhop do leſs, than require a retractation of ſuch principles, if he meant not intirely to give up all diſcipline!—And how can our author excuſe Dr. Whitby from prevarication; in firſt aſſerting theſe propoſitions, then retracting them, and afterwards retracting his retractation, when all the while his ſentiments muſt have been the ſame; ſince there could be no room for complaint, if he really diſbelieved them at the time biſhop Ward required his retractation.—By the by, one cannot but obſerve, that how cautious ſoever our author has been in general,

general, yet in this, as well as ſome other places, is eaſily diſcovered the real independent principle of "*no eſtabliſhment*;" otherwiſe how could he ſo manifeſtly approve theſe two obnoxious propoſitions. Nor can one well paſs by the remarkable p. 35. where our eſtabliſhment is *decently* complimented with an alluſion to Bel and the dragon.—Our author then makes three remarks on the foregoing detail; his firſt is a conceſſion of what I have aſſerted above, viz. that the conceſſions of worthy men amongſt us are only to be taken as inſtances of moderation and charity; not as acknowledgments of any thing in our eſtabliſhment that makes communion with us illegal.—And conſequently this precludes him from uſing the ſaid conceſſions as a proof of the illegality of our eſtabliſhment. The ſecond remark is, I think, anſwered by the account of the ſentiments and conduct of the majority of the commons in 1668.—And the third plainly ſhows us how we muſt always expect to be thanked by ſome ſort of men; if we give them any thing ſhort of all they aſk.

The compariſon of the Savoy conference to the council of Trent (whoever made it) I own appears to me more like the impotent inſinuations of a defeated litigant againſt his judge and jury, than quite becomes a liberal enquirer after truth. In the ſame ſtrain too is the lamentation, p. 36. That the propoſal for an alteration in our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, 1689, was laid before the convocation; which ſurely an impartial perſon would have thought juſt as reaſonable a meaſure, as conſulting the college of phyſicians concerning a review of the diſpenſatory, or the bench of judges in a reviſal of the ſtatutes; and

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ſo it ſeems thought thoſe, whom our author himſelf calls "*worthy biſhops, and pious and learned divines,*" ſince this was the method they propoſed to purſue.—But though a profeſſed council for the diſſenters might think it allowable to urge every thing that can be ſaid in their favour, and to paſs in ſilence what makes againſt them; yet from a profeſſed enquirer after truth, a different conduct might be expected.—And conſequently it is our buſineſs to remind our author, that in the foregoing detail of facts, concerning attempts to alter our eſtabliſhment, there are ſome omitted, the conſideration of which may ſet our principal queſtion in a light very different from that in which he has choſe to view it.—Will our author give us leave to aſk him, why he choſe to paſs over ſo ſlightly the period from 1641 to 1662?—Was it becauſe he thought the attempts to alter our eſtabliſhment in that period, and which ſo unhappily ſucceeded, were no argument in favour of again trying to throw down fences?—This indeed is a ſufficient reaſon for his ſilence; but is alſo a very good one for our mentioning thoſe tranſactions, as the confuſion, anarchy and enthuſiaſtic madneſs of thoſe times muſt be, one would think, a ſufficient warning againſt opening the way to ſuch ſcenes again, by parting with our eſtabliſhment.—He tells us indeed, that "*the violence of the ruling biſhops brought on theſe events, and wiſhes for a cloak to hide it*;" but are we obliged to ſubſcribe to his aſſertion in this point?—Or would he allow us to urge, that the plots of puritans and diſſenters have drawn upon them the reſtrictions they have at any time been obliged to ſubmit to?—May we not be allowed alſo to remind our

author

author of the moderation evident in the toler ation act?—Which plainly ſhows, that we are willing to give all indulgence to tender conſciences, which is conſiſtent with our civil liberty, and religious obligations.—But our author indeed has given us to underſtand, that he thinks the diſſenters have little to thank us for, on this account, in p. 52. where he tells us, that "*ſuch* "*a* TOLERATION *as preſuppoſed the* ESTABLISH-"MENT *of a* NATIONAL CHURCH,—a *tolera-*"*tion* conſiſting in an indulgence with reſpect "to ſeparate places of worſhip, or different "modes of diſcipline, or in allowances of par-"tial and occaſional conformity," is not what is contended for by thoſe whom he calls "*the* "*advocates of religious freedom.*"—And then he gives his own ſenſe of toleration; in a paſſage before quoted, from the ſame 52d page, and which is ſo evidently the Independent's ſenſe of toleration, that, I confeſs, I cannot ſee how it is poſſible to explain it otherwiſe.—After the avowal of theſe ſentiments, we ſhall not be ſurprized, on looking back to p. 46.--to find ourauthor declare, that, "*there is not, perhaps, an* "*inſtance of a law enacted in a proteſtant commu-*"*nity, which is leſs defenſible in a religious view,* "*than that of the ſacramental teſt, enjoined as a* "*qualification for civil offices.*"—If, by inſerting the word *religious*, our author means to wave all conſideration of it in a civil light, that we cannot agree to; becauſe, when the very end of the law, is to exclude improper perſons from civil offices, the propriety of the law is certainly to be examined in a civil light; and in that light it certainly is ſo defenſible, that the neceſſity of ſuch an one muſt evidently appear, one wou'd think,

think, to all impartial examiners; eſpecially when it is known to be principally level'd at the papiſts, whoſe principles diſqualify them for civil offices amongſt proteſtants.—And in a religious view; if an eſtabliſhment is lawful, (which is what we aſſert, and are perſuaded is ſufficiently prov'd,) a teſt muſt certainly be as lawful.—Becauſe if it be lawful to form any religious eſtabliſhment, it muſt be lawful to maintain that eſtabliſhment; and conſequently to exclude thoſe, whoſe principles muſt incline them to wiſh to demoliſh it, from civil offices; and that not ſo much becauſe their religious principles incapacitate them for the diſcharge of ſome branches of duty belonging to ſuch offices, (tho' in ſome caſes even that may be an objection;) but chiefly becauſe many civil offices greatly influence legiſlation; as might be eaſiy ſhown in many inſtances.—And for this reaſon I cannot but wonder that ſo great and good a man as biſhop Burnet, in his ſpeech againſt the bill to prevent occaſional conformity (when it was rejected) ſhou'd entirely keep ſilence on this head; and chiefly confine himſelf to ſhow, that the diſſenters had, on many occaſions, ſhown themſelves good ſubjects.—Whereas the queſtion was not, whether there were inſtances of their behaving well, when they were unarmed with power; but whether it was fit to indulge them with ſuch privileges, as might introduce them to an equal ſhare of power, with thoſe who were hearty friends to the eſtabliſhment?—And this queſtion ſeems eaſy to be determined, by this one conſideration, viz. that, as diſſenters, they muſt wiſh to have the eſta-

bliſhment

bliſhment alter'd.—So that the queſtion relative to a teſt, here ſeems to be conducted in a manner exactly ſimilar to that concerning non-reſiſtance; when the defenders of that doctrine argue, from the good diſpoſition of the reigning prince, for a general unlimited power; which we know is very eaſily anſwer'd; and in the ſame way may all arguments, from inſtances of the diſſenters having been friends to liberty, be anſwered.—Beſides, experience has given us woeful proof, what liberty is to be expected from, even proteſtant diſſenters, when they have the upper-hand; witneſs the times of confuſion and oppreſſion, from 1641. to the reſtoration; witneſs the ſufferings of the epiſcopal party in *Scotland*, in the laſt century; and to mention no other witneſs the petition of the kirk of *Scotland*, to queen *Ann*, at the beginning of her reign, againſt the toleration of the epiſcopal party; even about the very time when the friends of the diſſenters in *England*, were oppoſing the bill to prevent occaſional conformity.—I wou'd not be thought hereby to ſpeak with diſreſpect of thatworthy biſhop I have juſt mention'd; I only ſpoke of his method of arguing, to ſhow the inconcluſiveneſs thereof; and cannot but lament that ſo great a man ſhou'd be ſo invincibly prejudiced, as not to ſee the conſequences of the practice he was defending; viz. occaſional conformity; which, let what will be ſaid in defence of it, muſt certainly, to a perſon of very moderate capacity, if unprejudiced, appear a very groſs prevarication.—And indeed it is amazing, how little influence ſo clear an argument, in favour of the bill, as the following, had upon the houſe; (for I don't find they attempted to anſwer

ſwer it;) viz. if diſſenters think our terms of communion unlawful, why do they ever conform?—If not, why do they ſeparate from us?—But his lordſhip's prejudices undoubtedly aroſe from his gratitude to the diſſenters for their befriending liberty on many occaſions; in which gratitude I ſincely join with his lordſhip, in a reaſonable degree; that is to ſay, I wiſh all ſincere proteſtant diſſenters as much indulgence, as my own liberty of conſcience, and the welfare of the church, to which I belong, can admit. But this I cannot think by any means extends to wiſhing the repeal of the teſt act; or ſuch an univerſal toleration as our author pleads for.—As to the firſt, I muſt confeſs that I think the continuance of an eſtabliſhment, without a law to anſwer the end of the teſt act, a mere impoſſibility, or at leaſt an high improbability.—If any other equally efficacious teſt, as the ſacramental one, could be thought of, I, ſuppoſe it would ſatisfy the friends of the church of *England* as well.—But if any one impartially conſiders the manifold prevarications and equivocations of popery, he will think it no eaſy matter to contrive ſuch a teſt; and if that we have anſwers the end, we ought to be cautious how we alter it.—And even with regard to the diſſenters; ſince the very end and deſign of the teſt, is to exclude thoſe from offices of truſt and power, whoſe principles naturally lead them to unſettle both our eccleſiaſtical and civil eſtabliſhment; it ſeems both natural and judicious to fix upon ſuch a teſt, as ſhall be a ſecurity in both particulars.—I ſuppoſe I ſhall be told that we have no right to uſe any teſt of religious principles as a ſecurity for our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment.—But let it be conſidered that religious

principles

principles have ſo much influence upon practice, that if we would avoid the effects, we muſt guard againſt the cauſe.—For men are men, and will favour thoſe of their own party, if they once get into power.—And therefore our buſineſs certainly is, to uſe our power, with moderation, but not willingly to give it up.—Our author himſelf has given us a proof how cautious we ought to be of admitting ſome proteſtant diſſenters into a ſhare of power, even in a civil view; ſince according to his account, p. 250. —the notion of election, &c. as naturally leads to depoſing kings, whom a few individuals diſlike, as the diſpenſing power of the pope.—If ſo, ſince ſome diſſenters undoubtedly hold this notion, and we have had woful experience, how far enthuſiaſm will carry men in civil commotions, ought we not equally to guard againſt enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition?—And what ſhall we ſay to our author's declaration, p. 286.— that "*ſome worthy men are of opinion that the doctrine of non-reſiſtance cannot be oppos'd in a religious view, but on the principles of the ancient puritans and independents.*"—If he agrees not with thoſe *worthy men*, it is not ingenuous to urge their authority; if he does we ſhou'd be glad to know whether he wou'd be thought a patron of the doctrine of non-reſiſtance; or that he wou'd be thought to hold the doctrines of the ancient puritans and independants.—

Again, in our author's detail, he intirely omits thoſe remarkable attempts to render our eſtabliſhment ineffectual, by the proclamations for univerſal liberty of conſcience in the reigns of *Charles* IId. and of *James* IId.—For, tho' the illegality of the method of granting thoſe indulgences,

indulgences, was a ſufficient objection to them; yet, I preſume, every true proteſtant wou'd have had as great an objection to the nature and tendency of them as to the mode of eſtabliſhing.—And this even the more ſenſible diſſenters themſelves plainly ſhow'd—And to ſpeak plainly (tho' without any deſign to irritate,) I cannot ſee any difference between the conſequences of our author's ſcheme, as explain'd p. 52. of this preface, and thoſe of the aboveſaid proclamations.—For if there were ſuch a toleration as there pleaded for, how cou'd there be any eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment?—And if there were no eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, there cou'd be no teſt, of religious principles; and without that, I really cannot poſſibly ſee how the papiſts cou'd be kept from creeping into legiſlative authority; and what wou'd be the conſequence of that need not be explain'd.—But ſuppoſe a teſt, not of the religious kind, cou'd be fram'd, ſufficient to keep the papiſts out of power; yet if the free profeſſion of popery were allow'd, what wou'd the conſequence be?—Wou'd not the probable encreaſe of it's profeſſors ſoon make them a formidable body; notwithſtanding all the aſſiduity of the proteſtant teachers?—Since the honeſt openneſs of our principles, are not a match for the ſecret, treacherous machinations of thoſe of that corrupted church.—Are not all our penal laws againſt popery, grounded partly, on this ſuppoſition?—And after a ſufficient encreaſe of the party among us, might not open force, or ſecret malice lay our government in the duſt?—So that with regard to the papiſts, not only an eſtabliſhment, but alſo a teſt act, and even penal laws ſeem neceſſary for our ſecurity.—In

ſhort,

ſhort, ſince we of the church of *England*, muſt think our own mode of worſhip the beſt; and conſequently the free uſe of it, one of the beſt privileges we enjoy, is it not our duty, as well as intereſt, to endeavour to maintain it?—And as we allow proteſtant diſſenters all toleration that we think we can do, with ſafety to ourſelves and friends, none ſurely can juſtly complain of any hardſhip.—Nor do I believe, that the moderate and judicious diſſenters themſelves wiſh for ſo extenſive a toleration, as our author pleads for; becauſe I think they muſt judge as they have done heretofore; and conſequently muſt ſee, that ſuch a throwing down of Barriers, wou'd put them in a far worſe condition than they are at preſent; by opening a way to the papiſts as well as themſelves.—And I cou'd not ſufficiently wonder that ſuch evident conſequences could eſcape the penetration of our author, were it not that we frequently ſee too cloſe a purſuit of one ſcheme carries men into meaſures directly contrary to what they aim at.

Our author having aſſerted, or taken for granted, that the lawfulneſs of the teſt act has been diſprov'd, (of which matter we have ſufficiently teſtified our opinion already,) at p. 51. proceeds to attack the preſent biſhop of *Glouceſter*'s alliance; and for about ten pages chiefly keeps to that ſubject.—This I omit the conſideration of, (except where what is ſaid, affects our own queſtion immediately;) becauſe, if the right reverend author thinks it of importance ſo to do, he will, no doubt, take proper notice thereof, himſelf.—For the ſame reaſon alſo I have omitted any conſideration of the preface to the 2d edition, except as above.—Our author next gives

us his reaſon for publication; viz. the apparent encreaſe of papiſts amongſt us.—Now tho' it may at firſt ſeem odd, yet, from what has been ſaid a little above, I fancy I may be credited when I give the very ſame reaſon, as inducing me to make the preſent remarks on the confeſſional.—For tho' as I ſaid above, I am far from thinking our author a well-wiſher to popery; yet I cannot but think it's friends will be very ready to avail themſelves of his arguments, for his kind of toleration.—But of this we may ſay a little more, when we conſider our author's propoſed form of ſubſcription.—

Our author proceeds next to account for his fears concerning the encreaſe of popery.—And, indeed, I wiſh thoſe fears are not too well founded; though I am led to this concluſion by far different motives from what he aſſigns.—His firſt reaſon, p. 64.—is an extract from Dr. Moſheim; but as it has appeared in a letter in St. James's Chronicle ſome time in the ſummer 1767, that that extract is a notoriouſly falſe tranſlation of the Latin, it would be only loſs of time to ſay any thing further upon it.—We have next, for about ten pages, intermixed with our author's obſervations on the ſaid paſſage, ſome doubts whether improvements in ſcience, are unfavourable to the intereſts of popery; amounting pretty clearly to a denial that they are ſo.—An accurate examination of our author's ſentiments on this head, ſeems to me to lead to ſo long a digreſſion from our principal point, that I think it may be omitted; only juſt obſerving that, as one cannot but wonder to find ſuch ſentiments eſpouſed by a profeſſed advocate for freedom of enquiry; ſo I cannot apprehend why the papiſts

ſhould

ſhould be ſo fond of maintaining that known maxim, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion*, if they had thought improvements in ſcience had favoured their claims.

In p. 74.—Our author calls upon the ſame hiſtorian, Dr. Moſheim, to maintain the truth of the aſſertion in the above-named extract (viz. That proteſtant churches are inclined to a reconciliation with the church of Rome;) by an inſtance of archbiſhop Wake's negotiating concerning an union betwixt us and the Gallican church.—But this affair has been ſet in ſo clear a light in the *firſt letter to the author of the Confeſſional*, that I think it needleſs to ſay any thing more on that ſubject.

When our author has done with Dr. Wake, he proceeds to conſider, Whether the apparent encreaſe of popery, does not require ſerious attention; and what popery has done to entitle it to complaiſance from reformed churches.—And I entirely agree with our author, That both clergy and laity, both makers and executors of the law, ſhould look about them; and I hope the late ſtep taken by the Houſe of Lords will be followed by ſome good effect.—But I cannot agree with our author at all in ſome of the meaſures he propoſes to prevent the encreaſe of popery; for reaſons already given, viz. that his ſcheme of toleration appears to me the very thing the papiſts would wiſh.—And having now finiſhed our remarks on the preface to the firſt edition, I will alſo conclude this letter, from,

Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

LET us next, Sir, consider the Confessional itself; beginning with the second chapter.

P. 35. note *e*.—"*An act* [*viz. against occasional conformity*] *which all the world knows discouraged heterodoxmen from coming to our altars.*" Can there be a more plain misrepresentation? Are not men, who have given the most solemn testimony that they are of our communion, to be esteemed orthodox? And does that act lay a penalty on any others? Again, was not that act designed to keep our members from other altars?—And does it any ways prohibit or discourage members of other communions from attending at our altars, except by discouraging insincere professions?

Again, p. 36. The same note.—"*The test act brings many men to our altars (and it is well if not some infidels among them) who would never come there of choice, or on a religious account.*" If the test act lays any penalty upon a man for refusing an office of profit or trust, then our author's assertion may be true; but I presume it will not be said it does. If men accept such posts voluntarily and freely, then I take it whatever is a known consequence or concomitant of accepting such places, must be voluntary likewise; and if so, I presume an impartial person would acquit the test act of forcing any to come to our altars.—If our author thinks those, who thus profane the most sacred ordinances, excusable; he need not much complain of any such restraints as subscriptions; because, I fancy, the same casuistry that suits one case may

may do in the other.—And if he does not think them excuſable (as I verily believe he does not) was it well to put ſuch a broken reed, as this objection againſt the teſt act into their hands?—For my part, when I ſee the leaſt countenance given to ſuch equivocation in ſerious matters, as cannot be reconciled even to ſound morality; I cannot help wiſhing that learned and ingenious men could ſo far forget their attachment to a favorite hypotheſis, as rather to give up the approbation of ſome abettors, than purchaſe it by ſuch means.—Not to ſay, that it is unkind to give ſome men hints of ſuch excuſes for their conduct, as their own prejudices may be apt to make them lay too great a ſtreſs upon.—But how hard are ſome men to pleaſe!—We have here a complaint of the abuſes, as it is ſaid, occaſioned by the teſt act; and about ſeven or eight lines before, we had as loud a complaint againſt two archbiſhops, and moſt of the biſhops, becauſe they oppoſed the repeal of another act, whoſe ſole aim was to prevent thoſe abuſes.

P. 37.—Our author ſeems to think he has urged a dilemma that will determine his point; when he ſays, unleſs "*the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or practice.*"— And may there not be ſuch caſes?—For inſtance, if a clergyman is perſuaded, in his own mind, that any point of doctrine is true, and neceſſary to be believed and taught; is he, or is he not obliged to teach it?—And if one of his audience, by invincible prejudice, or any other means, cannot underſtand the force of the arguments, and conſequently, is not convinced; is he, or is he not,

on our author's principles, obliged to believe it?

P. 39.—"*No wiſe man, who hath duly conſidered the genius and deſign of the chriſtian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church, or church governors, go beyond their* plain commiſſion."—The ſole queſtion in diſpute is, whether they do go beyond their commiſſion?—This, therefore, ought not to be taken for granted; and unleſs that be taken for granted, there is no force in what is here ſaid.—And, on the other hand, if that were proved, I know none that would waſte their time in pleading for the utility of any thing, which appears to them to be proved unlawful.—Our author proceeds, "*And whatever may be left to the prudence and diſcretion of church governors, there is* ſo much more *left to the conſcience of every chriſtian in his perſonal capacity, that it greatly behoves ſuch governors to beware they encroach not on a province which is without their limits.*"—This proceeds on the ſame ſuppoſition as the former ſentence, that church governors go beyond their limits.—Which is by us denied, in the matter in queſtion.—But why does our author talk of limits, when he allows church governors no power at all, in this matter; for if all eſtabliſhments are unlawful, where is there any room for a church governor's power?—Beſides, as we deny there is any encroachment made on private rights, it ought to be proved, not barely aſſerted.

P. 41.—"*Very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of it's utility is made by our bleſſed Saviour to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which the ordinary church governors can have no farther diſcernment than other men.*"—Is not

not our author here miſled into a change of the queſtion? Is he not here ſpeaking of the effect of thoſe religious principles which are ſown in every private chriſtian's mind, by inſtruction or ſtudy of the ſcriptures; or their influence on his life; alluding to our Saviour's compariſon of thoſe principles to good ſeed, which he ſays, when 'tis "*ſown on good ground brings forth plenteouſly?*" If this is not his meaning, I cannot underſtand the paſſage. For certainly he cannot mean, that the goodneſs of a man's heart or *the inward frame of it*, is the only qualification neceſſary in teachers; becauſe, how valuable ſoever ſuch a qualification is, in itſelf, certainly ſomething more is requiſite; otherwiſe weakneſs or ignorance would be no objection; ſince a very weak and ignorant head may accompany an excellent heart.—I muſt ſuppoſe then, that the author's meaning is as above; and then I muſt beg leave to ſay, the queſtion is changed; ſince the ſubject of our enquiry is not, what beſt promotes a man's perſonal improvement of the good principles he imbibes; but concerning the lawfulneſs and utility of requiring teſts of miniſters principles, in order to ſecure the teaching of pure religion?—Our author's aſſertion is concerning the private influence of religious principles on individuals; and the queſtion in diſpute is, concerning the method of ſecuring a right outward profeſſion, and the profitable public teaching of thoſe principles.—Private edification is, doubtleſs, the ultimate end aimed at: the ſecuring outward profeſſion of right principles, and public teaching according to ſuch profeſſion is the means to attain that end. Church governors, therefore, neither ſcrutinize the heart; nor is it

needful ſo to do, for their views.—If the teacher's profeſſion and preaching be right, that is all his hearers, (and conſequently thoſe who authorize him) have any concern with; as our Lord intimates to the Jews, when he commands them to obſerve the inſtructions of thoſe "*who ſit in Moſes' ſeat.*"—Let the man himſelf look to the improvement of his religious principles, in his own private life.—Our author will not ſuppoſe that the defenders of ſubſcription maintain, that the perſon himſelf receives any perſonal edification from his own ſubſcription; he knows very well, that ſubſcriptions are only required as a teſtimony of the ſubſcribers ſentiments to others. —And this, by the bye, ſhews the inutility of his conceſſion, in p. 378.—above taken notice of.

In P. 42. 43.—We have a very exact (I cannot ſay cand d) account of the conduct of a certain, not inconſiderable ſet of men.—When our author diſcovers by what means he was enabled to make his calculation concerning the private ſentiments of the clergy, it will be time enough to examine the juſtneſs of it; at preſent it will be ſufficient to ſay, that we think nothing but the moſt accurate inſight into the human heart can authorize ſuch declarations; however, it would be uncandid to ſuppoſe, that he is acquainted with none whoſe conduct may lead him to ſuch a concluſion; and if he is acquainted with any, it will be charitable in him to inform thoſe of the ſecond claſs here deſcribed, how they may defend themſelves here and hereafter for ſuch a conduct.—For our part, we undertake to defend none, who prevaricate in theſe ſolemn matters; but we are, notwithſtanding, cautious

whom

whom we condemn; though we cannot tell how to exculpate thoſe who go into practices which they themſelves declare they think unlawful.

In what ſenſe the deſign of preventing *diverſity of opinions* is to be taken, will more properly be conſidered in another place.

P. 45.—Such uncharitable invectives as the two lines, compoſing this page, contain, on an whole body of men, is ſo general a charge, as neither admits of, nor, I think, requires any anſwer.

P. 47, 48.—"*The ſum of the whole matter then is this.—Lodge your church authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever reſtrictions you think proper, you cannot aſſert to it a right of deciding in controverſies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require aſſent to a certain ſenſe of ſcripture, excluſive of other ſenſes, without an unwarrantable interference with thoſe rights of private judgment, which are manifeſtly ſecured to every individual, by the ſcriptural terms of chriſtian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the proteſtant reformation.*"—What does the author mean by *deciding in controverſies?*—If he means any more than *declaring that the contents of a certain confeſſion, are what the maintainers of ſuch confeſſion hold to be ſcriptural doctrines*, and conſequently, *a declaring that they who deny the truth of ſuch contents, do, in their opinion, deny ſcriptural doctrines*; If, I ſay, he means any more than this, he means what no proteſtant church, that I know of, aſſerts any right to; at leaſt more than our church aſſerts; and conſequently we are not concerned in his aſſertion in this paragraph.—If he means no more than as above, we abſolutely deny his aſſertion; and as his is a bare aſſertion, a bare denial is, I think,

think, a ſufficient anſwer in this place; but to make the juſtice of ſuch denial evident, we need only obſerve, that every individual, who aſſerts the truth of any doctrine, aſſerts a right to decide, in the above ſenſe, as much as any church does by eſtabliſhing a confeſſion.

P. 49.—"*This point being ſettled.*"—That muſt be then by his acknowledging our ſenſe of the word *deciſion*; otherwiſe, we ſee it is far from being ſettled.—However, let us ſee what follows. —"*The ſquabbles among particular churches, concerning their ſuppoſed liberty within their reſpective departments (in ſo far as theſe confeſſions come in queſtion) is about a thing of nought.—For none of them having a right to eſtabliſh, or to preſcribe ſuch doctrinal confeſſions for the whole body, it is matter of great indifference (ſetting aſide the ſcandal of it) in what degree they exclude, or make room for one another.*"—Does the author, by "*the ſquabbles among particular churches concerning their ſuppoſed liberty within their reſpective departments,*" mean, "*any diſputes between proteſtant churches, whether each has a right to eſtabliſh it's own confeſſion, for it's own uſe?*"—If there are any ſuch diſputes, I do not recollect them; at leaſt, I do not recollect any inſtance where we have denied it to another church, or where we have been denied to have it; unleſs by independents, &c. and therefore we ſeem not concerned in this matter; nor do I ſee what pretence any proteſtant church could make, to deny another the very right they aſſume themſelves?—And if this is not the ſenſe, I do not know what can be meant by a diſpute, "*concerning their liberty within their reſpective departments.*"—But I am the more inclined to think this muſt be the ſenſe, becauſe our author ſays, the

the diſpute "*is about a thing of nought*;" and then aſſigns this reaſon, that "*it is a matter of great indifference in what degree they* [particular churches] *exclude or make room for one another*;—that is, I ſuppoſe, it is a matter of great indifference, (or, "*a thing of nought*") whether any particular church uſe a more or leſs comprehenſive confeſſion.—One would think I cannot be miſtaken in our author's meaning here; but what makes me doubt it is, that if this be really "*a thing of nought*," *a matter of great indifference*, I cannot find out how it happens, that ſo much work is made about this very thing, by the Confeſſional. For, as our author acknowledges, p. 17.—that ſome ſecurity may be expected; and here ſays, it is immaterial whether the form be more or leſs comprehenſive; i. e. "*in what degree particular churches exclude or make room for one another*;" there ſeems to be an end of the diſpute.—But our author ſays, "*none of them* [particular churches] *having a right to eſtabliſh or preſcribe ſuch doctrinal confeſſions for the whole body.*"—This ſeems as if he thought he had proved this point againſt his adverſaries; whereas I know of no proteſtant church that pretends to eſtabliſh or preſcribe ſuch confeſſions to other churches, in any manner that is or can be unlawful.—The misfortune is, our author ſeems to confound two things with each other; which are very different, viz. the right of eſtabliſhing a confeſſion within our own department; and the right of eſtabliſhing one for other churches.—And from thus confounding two different things, the queſtion muſt become perplexed.—For though we claim a right to eſtabliſh a confeſſion in our own department, and to require all candidates for the miniſtry to ſubſcribe it, and

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alſo to diſtinguiſh the members of our own church by their approbation of it: yet, with regard to the members of other churches, we attribute no authority to it, we only offer it to their conſideration, to compare with their own; that they may either come over to us, or remain where they are, as their conſciences direct them.

But our author goes on, p. 51.—"*Let us ſuppoſe that proteſtant churches* have *ſuch a right, each within it's own confines: the queſtion is, How ſhall one church exerciſe this right, without encroaching on the right of another?*"—To anſwer one queſtion by another, How ſhall the exerciſe of one church's right, *within it's own confines*, encroach upon the right of another? How can the conduct of one church towards it's own members, at all interfere with the rights of another church over it's members? Can a man be the member of two churches at the ſame time? If not, I cannot ſee how the rights of one over it's members, can be invaded by the exerciſe of the rights of another over it's members.—But what follows by way of anſwer to our author's queſtion? "*Upon the genuine grounds of ſeparation from the church of Rome, all particular churches are co-ordinate; they have all the ſame right in an equal degree; and the deciſions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very ſame level with thoſe of another.*" That is, each has the ſame authority *within it's own confines*; for let it not be forgot, that this is the ſuppoſition we ſet out with.—Well, to proceed, "*This being ſo, I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any church to* exerciſe *this right, in thoſe inſtances where ſhe eſtabliſhes doctrines* peculiar to herſelf, *and inconſiſtent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging thoſe of their right to*

eſtabliſh their own doctrines."—On the contrary, as above, I do not ſee how one church's eſtabliſhing doctrines peculiar to itſelf, any way abridges another church's right of doing the ſame; nay, this right is expreſsly reſerved to every church; by the ſuppoſition we ſet out with.—But let us obſerve what follows; "*No church can have a right to eſtabliſh any doctrines but upon the ſuppoſition that they are true.—If the doctrines eſtabliſhed in one church are* true, *the contrary doctrines eſtabliſhed in another church muſt be* falſe."—Let us be cautious; our author ſays, that the right of eſtabliſhing any doctrine, depends upon *the ſuppoſition that it is true*; therefore, though only the peculiar doctrines of one church can be true, abſolutely ſpeaking; yet the contrary doctrines may be *ſuppoſed true* by thoſe who eſtabliſh them; and then they have, by our author's own confeſſion, a right to eſtabliſh them.—And therefore, the concluſion drawn by our author in this laſt ſentence falls;—for the doctrines eſtabliſhed in both churches may be true in the opinion of the eſtabliſhers; and certainly are ſo, if they are ſincere.—And conſequently Dr. Rutherforth's very ſenſible refutation of the ſophiſtry of this paſſage is good; (I only mean by ſophiſtry, a fallacious argument, without intending to accuſe the author, of diſcovering it to be ſuch, when he urged it;) notwithſtanding what our author ſays at the concluſion of his long note, begun p. 52.—For notwithſtanding church governors have a right to eſtabliſh a confeſſion, each individual, as the doctor allows, has a right to reject it; if he cannot conſcientiouſly aſſent; and therefore the parallel is exact, between ſuch a church, and a voluntary ſociety, where the con-

conſent of all the members is required.—I beg the doctor's pardon for thus interfering where he is ſo well able to defend himſelf; but it ſeemed neceſſary to ſay thus much for our own arguments.

However, that we may do our author juſtice, let us conſider his note *m.* p. 51. where he gives us one, and only one inſtance of a church's maintaining this principle, viz. from Mr. La Roche; whether this proves that proteſtant churches were ſet up every where on this principle, and uſed this term, merits conſideration.—But ſuppoſe we take our author's word as to the fact; yet what is the preciſe meaning of this term?—It is, we are told, "*that no church ſhould have dominion over another church.*"—Very well; and how does the maintaining a right in any church to eſtabliſh a confeſſion *within its own confines*, (obſerve that ſtill) imply a claim to any dominion over another church, i. e. *without its own confines?*—Certainly not at all.—And ſo plainly thought thoſe very refugees, whom our author mentions, for they ſubſcribed two confeſſions; which however abſurd in itſelf, ſhowed plainly that they thought the uſe of a confeſſion, in any church, no claim of dominion over another. Nay, I think, this very principle a convincing proof of the right; for if no church has any claim of a dominion over another, then certainly each has a right to profeſs its own opinions, none elſe having a right to prohibit them.—Beſides, if the principle of co-ordination, whatever it means, will not allow the right of profeſſing what we believe true, and contradicting what we believe falſe, it cannot be a proteſtant principle, as it would then condemn

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our ſeparation from the church of Rome.—Our author, in the latter end of his note, begun p. 52, tells us, "*he has explained himſelf beyond poſſibility of being miſtaken by any reader of common ſenſe and common attention, by conſidering the caſe of* more *than* one *proteſtant church in one proteſtant ſtate.*"—This refers, I ſuppoſe, to p. 54, where our author ſays, "*It is true proteſtants of one ſtate or country have been tender of condemning the confeſſion of thoſe of another, by any public ſentence; and reaſon good; their powers are limited by their ſituation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their cenſures be regarded elſewhere. But what inſtance is there upon record, where this liberty has been allowed (as the co-ordinate principle manifeſtly requires it ſhould be) to more than* one *church in the ſame proteſtant ſtate? Every party, in every proteſtant ſtate, has by turns made ſome attempts to have their religious tenets eſtabliſhed by public authority. In every ſtate ſome one party has ſucceeded, and having ſucceeded, impoſes its own confeſſion on all the reſt, excluding all diſſenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of chriſtians, in proportion as the civil magiſtrate is more or leſs in the mood to vindicate, or diſtinguiſh, the ſyſtem he ſees fit to eſpouſe.*" Let us here beware of having a new queſtion ſlipped in upon us.—The queſtion agitated in the Confeſſional, is, The right, &c. of eſtabliſhing *confeſſions* in proteſtant *churches*, vid. title page.—Now, if I miſtake not the ſenſe of this paſſage, (and if I do, our author will not, it ſeems, allow me common ſenſe or common attention) this paragraph is concerning the eſtabliſhing *a particular church* in a *ſtate*, or which is the ſame thing, *the eſtabliſhing the religious tenets of a particular church by public authority*; for I ſuppoſe the eſtabliſhing

bliſhing a church by public authority can mean neither more nor leſs than eſtabliſhing *that church's religious tenets.*—Now theſe I take to be very different queſtions; becauſe one is the act of eccleſiaſtical authority, and the other is the act of civil power. We might therefore very reaſonably leave the conſideration of this paragraph to others, as not belonging to our enquiry, eſpecially as it has been ſo well anſwered by the eſſay on eſtabliſhments.—But that we may not ſeem to ſhift it off on account of its force, let us conſider all that can poſſibly affect the church governors herein, and that is, a ſuppoſition that this act of the ſtate may be in ſome meaſure owing to their ſolicitations.—And where is the crime of ſoliciting protection from a ſtate?—For notwithſtanding our author's quotation, p. 28. from biſhop Hoadley's ſpeech, where he ſays, "*The principle of ſelf-defence may defend all the uſurped authority of the church of Rome,*" we cannot but think that principle very juſt.—And I have heard ſome hints, (from ſtrenuous advocates for liberty) as if the biſhop lived to alter ſome of his ſentiments on the head of ſubſcription; which, if it were known to the author, ought to have reſtrained him from urging the authority of a perſon, in a matter wherein that perſon himſelf held a different opinion.—But be that as it will; if we do not allow this principle, I cannot ſee how any proteſtant church can juſtify the ſoliciting the ſtate for laws to ſecure them againſt popery. And yet that this may lawfully be done, I preſume our author will not deny. For though he may ſay, that ſuch laws are only made againſt papiſts, as holding principles inconſiſtent with the peace of ſociety; yet he cannot deny that

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thoſe principles are either religious tenets, or founded on religious tenets; and therefore the laws, by condemning the principles pernicious to ſociety, do, in effect, condemn the religious principles on which they are grounded.—And hence I cannot but think, that the moſt effectual method of defending our penal laws againſt popery, is to ſay, that we only condemn ſuch religious principles, as operate to the prejudice of ſociety; as the other defence ſeems to me ultimately to terminate in this.—But ſuppoſing the common argument good, I would ſtill aſk our author, whether the popiſh principle of burning heretics, independent of its effects on civil ſociety, would not authorize proteſtants to ſeek protection from the ſtate, merely in a religious light?—Could we be ſaid to encroach on any man's juſt liberty hereby, any more than he who confines a madman?—I think I may rely upon our author's making this conceſſion.—If not, he will pleaſe to interpret for me that permiſſion, nay, command of our Lord's, "*If they perſecute you in one city, flee ye unto another.*"—Which I think can mean nothing but to adviſe chriſtians, in conſciouſneſs of human frailty, to ſeek protection from perſecution.—If then 'tis lawful to ſeek protection againſt one enemy, it muſt be lawful to ſeek it againſt another.—And conſequently a proteſtant church may ſeek for protection againſt any other church, and againſt all other churches, from whom they apprehend danger to the true religion, or to themſelves in the profeſſion of what they think true religion.—The ſtate indeed has a right to judge of the juſtice of their apprehenſions; but if the church itſelf is fully convinced they are well grounded, it has an equal

right to ſeek protection in all caſes, as the principle of ſelf-defence muſt operate as well in one caſe as another, and principally in ſupport of our moſt truly valuable privileges.—As to the right of the ſtate to interfere, if that ſhould be denied, let it be conſidered, that if the church have a right to aſk protection, (as I hope is proved) I think it muſt follow, that the ſtate has a right to give it, if it chooſe ſo to do; for the church's right to aſk is, on ſuppoſition that the thing is lawful to be granted.—And beſides, is it not the duty of the ſtate to protect the people in their moſt valued rights?—What remains then is only to enquire whether a right to aſk and a right to grant protection, implies a right to aſk and grant an excluſive eſtabliſhment?—And I think this cannot be doubted, when we conſider what our author has ſaid, p. 52. viz. "*If the doctrines eſtabliſhed in one church are true, the contrary doctrines eſtabliſhed in another church muſt be falſe.*"—For though the aſſertion would not hold there, where different bodies of men were ſuppoſed to judge of different doctrines, and where different bodies were ſuppoſed to be the eſtabliſhers thereof; yet it will hold here, where the ſame body of men are to judge of different doctrines; for in this caſe, if they judge one ſet of doctrines *true*, they muſt judge the contrary ones *falſe*; and conſequently cannot refuſe to eſtabliſh the former, unleſs they will refuſe to eſtabliſh truth; nor conſent to eſtabliſh the latter, unleſs they will wilfully eſtabliſh error.—To ſay that errors may be acknowledged errors, and yet not eſſential, is ſaying nothing.—Becauſe there can be no right to eſtabliſh error, as believed to be error, as our author rightly aſſerts.

aſſerts.—Invincible error, in things not eſſential, may be a plea for toleration, but not for an eſtabliſhment.—Now, if the ſtate think it lawful or neceſſary to eſtabliſh any one church, it muſt think it equally ſo to maintain and defend that church; as this muſt appear to be defending the true religion.—And if ſo, it muſt think it lawful and neceſſary to uſe ſuch means as appear equitable and expedient for that purpoſe; that is, to uſe our author's own words, "*by excluding all diſſenters from more or fewer privileges of citizens*."—So that the real difference between our application of the principle of ſelf-defence, and that of the church of Rome, conſiſts in the degree to which it is carried, and the authority on which we proceed.—They ſtretch it to the extirpation of adverſaries by fire and faggot; we only carry it ſo far as to ſecure ourſelves from the power of our adverſaries; and have actually ſhown by the act of toleration, that we are willing to grant, to proteſtant diſſenters, all the liberty we can, conſiſtent with our own ſafety.—They proceed upon their own uſurped authority; we ſubmit our cauſe to the impartial civil power.—And now I will not ſay, I am ſure all candid and intelligent chriſtians muſt acknowledge, that this boaſted principle of co-ordination is ſhown not to be ſufficient for the purpoſes for which our author has urged it; but I will ſay, I hope all ſuch chriſtians will acknowledge it.

What follows in p. 54, 55, is a general charge of inconſiſtency, or that ſome have condemned at one time what they approved at another.—Let ſuch anſwer for themſelves, when it appears who they are; for I think general accuſations, in matters of fact, one cannot ſet about anſwer-

ing.—At the end of note *p*, p. 55. we have the following quotation from biſhop Taylor, in capitals; "*we cannot enlarge that ſyſtem or collection*;" viz the ſyſtem of articles which Chriſt and his apoſtles did lay.—To enlarge a ſyſtem of articles, is certainly to encreaſe the number of articles, not to lengthen by explanation or illuſtration any particular article, the ſenſe remaining.—We acknowledge therefore, that, in this ſenſe, "*we cannot enlarge the ſyſtem laid down by Chriſt and his apoſtles*;" but we affirm alſo, that we do not enlarge it; i. e. we do not eſtabliſh any doctrine as neceſſary to ſalvation, which Chriſt or his apoſtles have not taught.—It is now time to aſſure you, I am, ſir, &c.

LETTER VIII.

HAVING now, ſir, we hope, ſufficiently made appear the right of proteſtant churches to eſtabliſh confeſſions of faith; our next ſtep is, to ſhow the Utility of ſuch formularies.—And to this purpoſe let us conſider a maxim or two adopted by the reformers, which our author expreſſes his diſlike of; and to the adoption of which maxims he attributes the introduction of the uſe of confeſſions, and conſequently ſeems to put the iſſue of the queſtion, concerning their utility, on this point.—In page 3, he ſays, "*The reformers having unhappily adopted certain maxims as ſelf-evident*," namely, "*That there could be no edification in religious ſociety without uniformity of opinion*,"—that "*the true ſenſe of ſcripture could be*

be but one."—The latter of theſe maxims we ſhall conſider in the firſt place, as it may tend to the confirmation of the truth of the other.—And let us be exact in our expreſſions, that we may not differ merely about words.—Muſt not then the reformers be underſtood to mean, that the true ſenſe of ſcripture can be but one, in the paſſages containing doctrines, neceſſary to be believed, in order to ſalvation?—So that this is not to be extended to ſuch paſſages as Dr. Powell is ſpeaking of, in the quotation, note *l*, p. 48.—for inſtance, in prophecies, where the primary and ſecondary ſenſes are allowed.—Now with this reſtriction will our author deny the truth of the reformer's maxim?—If he does, muſt he not maintain, that different doctrines are taught as neceſſary to ſalvation, by the ſame paſſage or text of ſcripture?—That is, that the inſpired writers intended different doctrines to be drawn from, or different ſenſes to be put upon, the ſame text.—For, let it be obſerved, we are here ſpeaking of the abſolute truth or falſhood of the ſenſe put upon any text of ſcripture; not of its truth or falſhood, according to the opinions of different perſons.—For we certainly muſt acknowledge, that every intelligent and attentive reader of the holy ſcripture, not only may, but ought to put ſuch ſenſe upon any text as appears true to him; his conſcience muſt be his guide, be it erroneous or not; but then we add, that amongſt the various ſenſes put by different men on any ſuch text as above deſcribed, only one can be abſolutely true.—For the admitting two or more ſenſes of ſuch texts, would be admitting the neceſſity of profeſſing two or more religions, in

order to ſalvation; ſince, by ſuppoſition, every ſenſe contains an article neceſſary to ſalvation.

Let us now paſs to the other maxim, viz. "*That there can be no edification in religious ſociety, without uniformity of opinion.*"—Now if, as I hope we have already ſeen, "*the true ſenſe of ſcripture can be but one*;" does not this maxim immediately follow;—unleſs we can ſuppoſe, edification in religious ſociety is to be obtained by mixing error with religion?—For certainly, if there is not uniformity in eſſential articles, in a religious ſociety, there muſt be error; becauſe, the want of ſuch uniformity implies the maintaining different opinions, on ſome ſuch article or articles of faith; and ſince only one of theſe opinions can be true, (as only one ſenſe of ſcripture is true) then ſurely it follows, that all difference from that is error.—And though the maintaining erroneous opinions will not prejudice a man's eternal intereſts, if his error is invincible; yet the admiſſion of profeſſors of opinions believed to be erroneous, into a religious ſociety, muſt juſt ſo far prevent the edification of that ſociety, as a mixture of error with true religion does; and conſequently prevent the good effects to be hoped for from preſerving the purity of religion.—It will not ſurely be ſaid, "*that poſſibly our own notions are erroneous, and the admiſſion of different profeſſors may therefore improve edification, by mixing better principles; and that we ought therefore to judge ſo favourably of all, as to think it poſſible their opinions may be more juſt than our own*;" this, I ſay, I ſuppoſe will not be urged, becauſe it is downright ſcepticiſm; and conſequently can never be acceptable to God.—For he has certainly, as all chriſtians muſt allow, commanded us to believe the

the doctrines taught by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, and to obey their precepts; and therefore to fluctuate in this manner, muſt be to diſobey his command; whereas there cannot be a doubt, but that he who has ſettled notions taken up on ſuch evidence as his own conſcience, on the beſt enquiry he can make, tells him is ſufficient, and regulates his life by them, acts agreeably to the will of God, and will be accepted by him.—Every man therefore who has ſettled his own notions, muſt think that the admitting profeſſors of different ſentiments, in important matters, into the religious ſociety to which he belongs, is mixing error with pure religion; and conſequently, muſt diminiſh the edification to be hoped for from religious aſſociation; unleſs the mixture of error with religion has no influence on it's edification; which, I think, I may conclude our author will not maintain.

However, to mention one convincing inſtance that edification in religious ſociety depends upon uniformity of opinion, (that is, in important points) we may conſider that the form of public worſhip muſt be regulated by the religious opinions of the worſhippers. Which cannot be doubted, if we give the ſlighteſt attention to the nature of public worſhip. And our author, I ſuppoſe, will not deny this; as he urges a ſuppoſed diſſonance between our articles and liturgy, as a defect or error in our eſtabliſhment. Nay, whether he will allow a neceſſity for a ſettled form, or plead for extemporary prayer, I think there cannot be a doubt, whether it ought to refer to the articles of our belief. Now ſuppoſe a religious ſociety, compoſed of the different ſects into which chriſtians are unhappily divided; and

let us conſider what form of worſhip they could unite in. Would they not differ as to the object of their worſhip? Would they not differ as to the preſent ſtate and condition of man; and conſequently as to his abilities to perform his duty; and conſequently as to the duties required of him? Would they not differ as to the manner and times of adminiſtring the ſacraments; nay, and even as to the neceſſity of complying with theſe ordinances at all, (if we admit into the number of chriſtian ſects quakers, &c.) Would they not differ as to the manner of appointing miniſters? Would they not differ as to the ſtate and condition of man immediately after death? Would they not differ as to the ſtate of future retribution? Would they not differ as to the nature of the ſupernatural aſſiſtances promiſed to chriſtians? Would they not differ as to the evidence of a man's being in a ſtate of grace? Would they not differ as to the terms of juſtification? Would they not differ as to the nature of God's decrees? Would they not differ as to the motives to, and efficacy of a life of virtue and piety?—In ſhort, what almoſt would they agree in?—For it is unneceſſary to inſtance in other points; ſince theſe are undoubtedly more than ſufficient to convince us of the impoſſibility that ſuch a ſociety, or at leaſt many of them, could ever unite in one form of worſhip; and conſequently, that all or much of the edification of public worſhip, ſo ſtrongly recommended, and ſtrictly commanded in ſcripture, would be loſt without uniformity.—To obtain, therefore, this deſirable uniformity, confeſſions of faith were eſtabliſhed.—The utility of theſe, therefore, is to be ſought, in a great meaſure, in their ſuitableneſs

ableneſs to this end; and that they are uſeful in this light appears from hence; that they ſerve as teſts to the ſociety, what principles we maintain, or what doctrines we acknowledge to be taught in ſcripture.—For it muſt not be forgot, that we conſider confeſſions of faith only as abridgements or explications of ſcripture, and allow them no authority, otherwiſe than as we ſuppoſe them conſonant to ſcripture. And thus confeſſions *teſtify* an uniformity of opinion. Further, they enable the people to judge with more eaſe of the doctrines of their teachers; and they can more readily and eaſily compare them with ſuch ſhort forms, than with the whole tenor of ſcripture; and being firſt convinced that theſe confeſſions are agreeable to ſcripture, they may with equal ſafety rely upon this method of trial, as upon a compariſon of their doctrines with ſcripture.—— And thus they help to preſerve the people from deluſion; and ſo tend to *preſerve* an uniformity of opinion. Again, they ſerve alſo as a rule by which church governors may examine the principles of candidates for the miniſtry, before they commiſſion them to exerciſe that important office; and likewiſe as a form by which they receive the engagements of ſuch candidates to adhere to their avowed principles in the execution of their miniſtry. And thus they ſerve as a guard to *prevent attempts* by falſe brethren to *deſtroy* uniformity of opinion.

There are alſo ſeveral other good uſes of confeſſions; as the ſpecifying our grounds of ſeparation from the church of Rome; and conſequently vindicating it in the eyes of impartial men; and the ſerving for a form to admit proſelytes. They are of uſe alſo as a rule to point

out the principal articles of faith, and the particular duties incumbent on chriſtians, to ſuch as either want leiſure or ſkill, to compare one part of ſcripture with another, and ſo to form for themſelves from thence, a ſyſtem of chriſtianity. They are of uſe likewiſe as a public teſtimony of the tenets of our church, to acquit us of ſuch calumnies, as our adverſaries are ever ready to throw upon us.—And likewiſe, they are of indiſpenſable uſe to build an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment upon.—For without a confeſſion of faith, ſhort or long, how can any church be eſtabliſhed, any more than a civil ſociety can ſubſiſt without laws?—Without a confeſſion of faith, how can any miniſtry be appointed?—How can any form of worſhip be ſettled?—Or, indeed, how can any religious, proteſtant ſociety be formed?—Nay, how can any proteſt againſt the church of Rome be maintained?—In ſhort, without a confeſſion of faith, how can any profeſſion of religion whatever be kept up?—For how can any man profeſs any thing, and not ſome way, either briefly or more diffuſely, expreſs the particulars of his profeſſion?—The force of theſe queſtions appear to me ſo evident, that I think there is no ſort of occaſion to enlarge upon the proof of them. All, I ſuppoſe, that will be ſaid againſt them is, that a ſhort confeſſion, ſuch as our author has given his aſſent to, p. 17. of pref. to 2d edit. will anſwer theſe ends as well as a larger, which our author calls a *ſyſtematical one*.—This plea is to be conſidered hereafter; and therefore, at preſent, we need only ſay, that if the ſufficiency of ſuch a ſhort confeſſion is diſproved, then the conceſſion that ſome confeſſion is needful, remains in full force, in behalf of theſe advantages here attri-

buted to confeſſions.—Only here we muſt urge, that if ſome confeſſion is lawful, as our author acknowledges, p. 17. *ut ſupra*;—and if it be alſo *neceſſary*; which we hope to ſhow by and bye, that he allows alſo; then it muſt follow, there muſt ſomewhere be a right lodged to fix upon and eſtabliſh this confeſſion.—And where can that be, but in the church governors, whoſe duty it is to keep order in that ſociety to which they belong, and preſerve the ſociety as far as in them lies, from deſtruction and even corruption; be theſe biſhops or others? Our author acknowledges, p. 17. *ut ſupra*; that this confeſſion or declaration, or ſubſcription, (for I make no difference) is for the ſecurity of the ſociety.—From theſe poſitions I infer, that it muſt be lawful for theſe governors, nay, it is their duty, to require ſubſcription to, or declaration of, whatever confeſſion they judge neceſſary for the ſecurity of the ſociety.—For if they have a right to require ſubſcription to any one propoſition, they have an equal right to require ſubſcription to as many as, and ſuch as they pleaſe; their authority is the ſame in all; and their own judgment is to be their guide.—And if they do not require ſubſcription to as many as they think needful for the ſecurity of the ſociety, they do not fulfil their duty, nor attain the end for which the ſubſcription is by our author, ſuppoſed lawfully to be required.—I know it will be ſaid, this is giving church governors a fine ſtretch of power.—But I anſwer, I am fully perſuaded their power is not hereby ſtretched at all beyond what the above conceſſions of our author amount to; nor beyond what any friend of liberty may ſafely allow. For though they certainly have the right in this extent,

extent, if they have any at all;—yet does not this give them any dominion over the conſciences of chriſtians, ſince we hold every individual, as we have repeatedly declared, to be at full liberty to aſſent to, or diſſent from all eſtabliſhed forms, according as he thinks them agreeable to ſcripture, or otherwiſe.

Our author makes a query, p. 2.—"*Whether the frequent occaſions of offence, which the liberty of ſearching the ſcriptures, maintained by proteſtants, muſt unavoidably afford, might not be prevented, by keeping the terms of communion ſufficiently open, for pious and reaſonable chriſtians to comply, without doing violence to their conſciences?*"—That is, I ſuppoſe, whether ſuch occaſions of offence might not be avoided, by either uſing no confeſſion at all, or a very comprehenſive one; having in his eye, probably, that mentioned p. 17. *ut ſupra?*—And tells us this "*cannot now be determined.*" Whereas, I apprehend, it may evidently be determined. For as to preventing theſe occaſions of offence, without any confeſſion at all; our author declares, p. 5. "*Theſe circumſtances* [the riſe of ſome ſects who were ſcandals to religion, and who pretended to defend their tenets on proteſtant principles,] *laid the proteſtants under a neceſſity of publiſhing to the whole world explicit confeſſions of their faith and doctrine.*"—Which is certainly as clear an acknowledgment of the neceſſity of uſing confeſſions, to remove ſuch occaſions of offence, as can be made.—And this is the acknowledgement hereof above promiſed to be produced.—And is not the neceſſity of confeſſions, an irrefragable argument of their utility? For can any thing be neceſſary that is of no uſe? If it be ſaid, they were of uſe then, but are not ſo now.

now.—We aſk, if the ſame cauſe here aſſigned does not now, alas, ſubſiſt, viz. to diſtinguiſh *ſerious and ſober proteſtant churches* (as our author terms them) from thoſe *ſcandals of religion, nuiſances of ſociety, and hot-headed irregulars*, (as our author alſo expreſſes himſelf?)—But to proceed; as to preventing theſe occaſions of offences, or the very ill conſequences of them, by a very comprehenſive confeſſion, we may conſider, that either thoſe who have a right to require ſubſcription, or elſe thoſe who are required to ſubſcribe, muſt judge whether the confeſſion be ſufficiently comprehenſive.—If the former, they tell you, that they have gone as far as their judgments allowed them; and really think that they have kept the terms of communion very ſufficiently open for pious and reaſonable chriſtians.—And ſo have tried the experiment; and conſequently it may be determined whether or no it has ſucceeded, when theſe occaſions of offences are ſpecified.—If the latter are to judge, our author furniſhes us with a convincing proof, that this experiment would not have ſucceeded, in p. 4. where he tells us, that there were ſome "*whoſe pride, paſſion, and ſelf-conceit knew no bounds; and whom probably the moſt reaſonable terms of communion would not have reſtrained.*"—And yet theſe would probably as ſtrenuouſly claim the title of pious and reaſonable chriſtians, as the friends of the Confeſſional could do.—Does not then this view of the caſe give us great reaſon to ſuppoſe, that, if there are yet occaſions of offence, or ill conſequences of them, it is not owing to want of moderation in thoſe who have eſtabliſhed confeſſions, but to want of humility, meekneſs, and a due

a due ſubmiſſion to reaſonable reſtraints, in thoſe who complain of them? —

One can hardly help wondering, that, after our author has, in p. 5. acknowledged the neceſſity of uſing confeſſions; and added, That "*proteſtant ſtates, by this means, acquitted themſelves, at leaſt among all equitable judges, of the ſcandal of abetting ſchiſmatical and ſeditious enthuſiaſts*;" he ſhould go about to prove in the reſt of that chapter, the inutility or ill ſucceſs thereof.—And eſpecially it ſeems ſurprizing, that he ſhould complain, that "*theſe confeſſions were applied to a more important purpoſe, than ſerving a preſent turn; by being ſubſcribed by the leading men of the communion to which they belonged, and becoming the teſt for trying the principles of candidates for the miniſtry.*" —This, I ſay, ſeems very ſurprizing; ſince without this further application, they could have been no more than a temporary expedient; and as ſoon as ever any new governors, leading men or teachers, had ſucceeded in the place of, or been added to thoſe who firſt publiſhed the Confeſſion, the accuſers would again have urged the calumny; ſo that there was certainly no other way to continue the advantage of the uſe of a confeſſion, but by continuing the uſe thereof.—Which is ſo evident a concluſion, it is hard to conceive how it could eſcape our author's notice.

In p. 6. we are told, that this ſubſcribing to confeſſions, "*embroiled different churches one with another.*"—How this can be made out I cannot ſee.—Becauſe, as long as different men held different ſentiments, and thought them worth diſputing about, and had their paſſions mutually inflamed, I apprehend they would contend as vehemently

vehemently for their ſeveral opinions, when they had not ſubſcribed them, as when they had; and perhaps more ſo; of which I think the writings of diſquiſitors, appealers, &c. are an unanſwerable proof.—But our author ſays; "*no*; *theſe opinions are ſubſcribed, and therefore they muſt be defended at all events.*"—This is, I think, a very unwarrantable way of accounting for people's conduct; however, I am ſure it is not generous; nor would it be thought ſo, if we were to ſay, that when diſquiſitions, &c. are once publiſhed, credit is at ſtake, and therefore they muſt be defended at all events.—All therefore that I can ſay is, that if there are any on either ſide the queſtion, who take up the pen to write againſt conviction, in obedience to paſſion, they are neither to be praiſed nor defended.

It ſeems it is to be laid to the charge of confeſſions alſo, that our adverſaries, the papiſts, inſulted the reformed on want of unity.—Which is juſt as fair as the laſt accuſation.—For confeſſions do certainly not *create*, but only *exhibit* diverſity of opinion.—The difference had certainly ariſen before the confeſſions were framed, otherwiſe the confeſſions could not have differed. The want of unity therefore was prior to the eſtabliſhment of confeſſions, and was the very cauſe thereof, and conſequently could not be the effect.—But ſuppoſing it was, where was the force of any argument the papiſts could form againſt us on this head?—What obligation are the reformed under to maintain that they are at unity one with another? If we pretended to infallibility indeed, the argument would be good; becauſe then diverſity of opinions, in important points, would invalidate ſuch a claim.—But even then,

then, each church muſt maintain the infallibility of every other reformed church as well as their own; otherwiſe the errors in other churches would not impeach their own claim.—Whereas it is well known that all proteſtant churches abſolutely diſclaim infallibility, as well as to themſelves as others.—Oh! ſays our author, (p. 41. pref. to 2d edit. and alſo p. 232 of Confeſſional) "*but proteſtant churches, though not infallible, are always in the right.*"—Let us put this out of ambiguous phraſe, and try whether there be any force in it againſt us.—We muſt underſtand this then as a claim, urged by a proteſtant church, and to expreſs it as ſuch a church would certainly do, (and who but the claimants themſelves ought to expreſs their own claims?) without any play upon words, it will ſtand, I apprehend, thus; "*though we do not pretend to be infallible, yet we are fully perſuaded we are in the right in all the doctrines we maintain.*"—Now is not this very different from the above expreſſion?—For if that means any thing that has force againſt us, *being infallible*, and *being always in the right*, ought to be ſynonimous expreſſions.—Whereas they evidently are not ſo.—For he who claims infallibility, aſſerts that he neither is nor can be miſtaken; whereas, he who maintains he is in the right, but withal diſclaims infallibility, only aſſerts, that he is not yet convinced of being miſtaken, but will not pretend to ſay, 'tis impoſſible he can be miſtaken.—And to ſhow how true this diſtinction is, I deſire to know if all diſſenters, who find fault with the eſtabliſhment, do not maintain as explicitly, that they are in the right, as the defenders of the eſtabliſhment can do?

But

But to proceed, our author tells us, that when proteſtants recriminated upon papiſts, concerning their own want of unity; they "*alledged (and with truth,* ſays our author) *that the points in diſpute among them had never been decided è cathedrâ, and ſo were left open to amicable diſpute, without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted amongſt proteſtants, were ſolemnly eſtabliſhed in their ſeveral confeſſions, &c.*"—Now whether this is juſtly ſaid, to be truly alledged, let us conſider.—Have not the doctrines in diſpute among papiſts been as ſolemnly decided, as thoſe controverted among proteſtants?—Have thoſe points diſputed among us been any otherwiſe decided than as each has been declared to be right doctrine by thoſe who maintain it?—And has not every one of the points in diſpute among papiſts been alſo declared to be right doctrine by thoſe who maintain it?—And if the points diſputed among papiſts have not been decided è cathedrâ, i. e. by an authority to which both parties ſubmit; can it be ſaid that the points in diſpute among proteſtants have ever been decided by ſuch an authority?—Conſequently ours are as open to amicable debates as theirs?—Beſides, where infallibility is claimed, there ought to be no points of conſequence undecided, becauſe the very uſe of infallibility is to decide ſuch points. And now can one but grieve to ſee a profeſſed and able proteſtant writer, for the ſake of oppoſing our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, ſpeak ſo favourably (not to ſay partially) of a weak popiſh argument againſt proteſtantiſm?—Thus, I hope, we have ſhewn ſufficiently, that the want of unity amongſt proteſtant churches, how much ſoever it may be to be lamented, is neither owing to

the eſtabliſhment of confeſſions; not indeed is any juſt objection to the reformation.—Nay, I think here is an evident proof, that the true proteſtant principle of the right of private judgment is preſerved in due vigour, ſince that obliges us as much to keep clear of errors (important ones) adopted by proteſtants, as from popiſh errors; and conſequently our very differences ſhow, that we act according to our own judgment.

Upon this account I may paſs by what our author ſays concerning the harmony of confeſſions, becauſe I do not undertake to ſhew the conſiſtency of all reformed churches with each other; and therefore, how laudable ſoever the deſign of the compilers thereof might be, I am not concerned to defend them.

However, I ſhall juſt ſay a word or two, concerning our author's obſervations on the *Corpus Confeſſionum*, in order to ſhow that it behoves us to conſult the books our author quotes, as his repreſentations appear to me not always ſo accurate as one could wiſh.

The edition of the *Corpus Confeſſionum* I refer to, is that of Peter and James Chouët Aureliæ Allobrog. 1612.

In anſwer to our author's query concerning the editor's note, on the 5th article, viz. "*Whether* "*does not their ſpecifying in the ſynopſis*, [that on this "*primary* article all the confeſſions agree, *ſeem to* "*imply that it was the ſingle article on which they* "*did all agree?*"—I anſwer; I think not.—The epithet *primary* ſeems a good reaſon why they ſhould make this obſervation on that article rather than any other?—Beſides, if our author will take the trouble to inſpect the Synopſis, he will

will find in articles the 1ſt, 2d, 6th, 10th and 11th, all the very ſame confeſſions cited as upon this 5th, and conſequently, as far as appears from the Synopſis, there is the ſame conſent on all thoſe articles, as on the 5th.—I have not examined the confeſſions themſelves, to ſee whether they agree with the ſynopſis; as I thought it not needful, the objection ſeeming to be fully anſwered by this inſpection of the ſynopſis; beſides, if an article is wanting in any confeſſion, it does not imply the diſſent of that church on that article; but only that it was not thought neceſſary to be inſerted in the confeſſion.—But as this only belongs to the proof of maintaining unity, I have not much concern with it.

Our author's 2d remark, page 14. is "*That* "*only* ſix *confeſſions, (and amongſt them not ours,)* "*are referred to as ſpeaking of* the providence of "God; *and that* eleven *out of* ſixteen *take no* "*notice of* the reſurrection of the dead."—As to the firſt of theſe obſervations; one would think that ſince it was with great reluctance, as our author declares, he obſerved this, he would have been well aſſured of the truth of the accuſation, before he had produced it; at leaſt that he would have looked into our confeſſion itſelf; and not have truſted to a ſynopſis or index, which is ſo often imperfect; eſpecially when his great diſlike to our confeſſion would make one ſuppoſe ſo capital a defect could not have eſcaped himſelf; if it had exiſted.—However, any one that will inſpect the very firſt article, will there find, that we believe God is, "*the preſerver of all things* "*viſible and inviſible.*"—Which I fancy will not be denied to be a proof, that we believe the providence of God.—Whether the ſynopſis is not

erroneous likewiſe on this head, as to ſome other churches, the annexed paſſages of the following confeſſions will inform us, viz. Helvetica, ſummaria, Baſiliæ compoſita.--page 87. 1mæ partis--Baſilienſis vel Mylhuſiana, page 93. 1mæ part.--Czengerina, page 187. 191. 1mæ part.—Polonica. page 203. 1mæ part. which aſſents to the Auguſtan confeſſion on this article.—Ditto, page 287. 2dæ partis, which refers as the laſt.—Auguſtana, page 8. 2 dæ part. Argentinenſis, page 222. 1mæ part.—Saxonica, page 72. 2dæ part. —Wirtembergica, page 142. 2dæ part.—N. B. The laſt cited are not ſo explicit as the reſt, but I think in the pages referred to, maintain what implies the belief of this article.—Theſe confeſſions added to thoſe cited in the ſynopſis, are the whole number contained in the corpus confeſſionum.—As to the ſecond of the above quoted obſervations, the following confeſſions may enable us to judge of the juſtneſs thereof;—viz. Helvetica, page 35. 39. 81.—1mæ partis.—Ditto ſummaria Baſiliæ compoſita, page 88. 89.—1mæ part.--Baſilienſis vel Mylhuſiana,--page 94. 95. 96.—1mæ part.—Gallicana, page 100. 104. —1mæ part. Czengerina,—page 196.—1mæ part.--Polonica, 203.--1mæ partis, aſſents to the Auguſtan confeſſion on principal articles.—Ditto page 287.—2dæ part. refers as the laſt—Argentinenſis, page 223.—1mæ part.—Saxonica, page 72. 92.—2dæ partis. Wirtembergica.—p. 142. 171. 172. 173. 174.—2dæ partis.—Bohæmica, page 244.—2dæ partis.—Which together with thoſe cited in the ſynopſis, make up the whole number, as above.—

We are told, page 15.—That, "*in ſome churches they have intirely drop'd them*, [*viz. eſtabliſhed*

" *bliſhed confeſſions, uſed as teſts of orthodoxy,*] " *or contented themſelves with ſome general declara-* " *tion or promiſe, from the miniſter that he will not* " *openly oppoſe them.*" If there are any churches which have intirely drop'd the uſe of confeſſions as teſts, till we are favoured with an account what churches they are, we can only ſay, that it ſeems the experiment does not anſwer to the ſatiſfaction of others; otherwiſe the example would have been likely to be more followed, at leaſt we of the church of *England*, ſeem either to know of no ſuch practice, or do not like the ſucceſs of it.—And the other expedient, of requiring a declaration, I think exactly the ſame, in effect, as requiring a ſubſcription.—For, if we think the confeſſion contains only true doctrines, why are we unwilling to ſubſcribe it? And if we believe it contains any unſcriptural doctrines, how can any conſcientious man promiſe that he will not teach any thing contrary thereto?—Would not that be declaring that he would willfully let error go uncontradicted; nay in ſome ſort countenanced, and thereby contribute to conceal the truth from his flock?—Would our author give our church governors ſuch a promiſe?—Or is not ſuch a promiſe far worſe than ſubſcribing in a literal, grammatical ſenſe, which he diſlikes ſo much?—

In page 16, our author ſays, " *in ſome churches,* " *a formal ſubſcription is ſtill required, even where* " *the inconveniences of it have been no leſs, and* " *where the moſt ſerious, conſcientious, and uſeful* " *miniſters, are ſtill groaning under the burthen of* " *ſuch ſubſcriptions.*"—This is a very general aſſertion, and, in my eye, ſomewhat bold; as our author takes upon him to ſpeak the ſentiments of,

and conſequently to determine who are, *the moſt ſerious, conſcientious, and uſeful miniſters*; and we are pretty well aſſured, from other paſſages of the Confeſſional, would allow none theſe titles, but thoſe who think as he does.—Suppoſing then he means that the church of *England* is one of thoſe churches, and ſuppoſing alſo, that he has a right to diſpoſe of the laudable epithets above mentioned, at his pleaſure; who can deny his aſſertion?—Becauſe it is undoubtedly confined to diſquiſitors, appealers, confeſſionaliſts, &c.—But then the aſſertion amounts only to this; that he and his friends diſlike confeſſions.—If he has not the right to diſpoſe of theſe epithets, then his aſſertion will juſtly be denied by all friends to our confeſſion, and conſequently, by ſome *ſerious, conſcientious, and uſeful miniſters*, if there are any ſuch amongſt them.

Concerning our author's firſt reflection, p. 16, we obſerve, That no reaſonable perſon could expect a proteſtant confeſſion of faith would ever ſtop a popiſh mouth, as to the general accuſation of hereſy; becauſe they call all who differ from them heretics; and a proteſtant confeſſion is a public avowal of difference from them; therefore confeſſions were not expected to ſtop ſuch accuſations; if they defend us amongſt impartial judges, it is as much as is deſired; and our author confeſſes they have had this effect, p. 5. That they have given theſe adverſaries any advantage, on the head of want of unity we cannot acknowledge; as we have above declared, we ſee no neceſſity to deny the charge of difference of opinion, among different proteſtant churches; and that we have only to maintain our own doctrines.—We have alſo above obſerved, that con-

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feſſions do not *create* but only *exhibit* difference of opinion.—For theſe reaſons, we cannot ſee any cauſe to lament, with our author, that our confeſſion contains many particulars.—Whether it contains too many, is quite a different queſtion from the enquiry of the Confeſſional; that being concerning the right and utility of eſtabliſhing confeſſions of faith in general; not concerning the propriety of the particulars in our own; tho' our author has now and then thrown in a hint or two on that head in his progreſs.

Our author's ſecond reflexion (p. 17.) is, "*That it was a greater misfortune ſtill, that confeſſions were eſtabliſhed as teſts of orthodoxy for the admiſſion of miniſters into their office.*"—If, as we hope, we have ſufficiently proved the right and utility of eſtabliſhing confeſſions, and requiring ſubſcriptions, this reflexion is thereby ſhown to be ill grounded.—He goes on, "*Had they been contented with a ſolemn declaration, on the part of teachers and paſtors,* That they received the ſcriptures as the word of God, and would inſtruct the people out of thoſe only, *leaving them at liberty to diſown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconſiſtent with them; in all human probability the intereſts of popery would have declined more viſibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more ſpeedily, as well as more effectually promoted.*" That ſuch a declaration would not anſwer the ends propoſed by ſubſcription; or indeed any end at all for preſerving the purity of religion; and alſo, that it is no more defenſible than a larger ſubſcription, we hope to ſhow hereafter; and conſequently, on ſuppoſition of our being able to prove this, may fairly infer a concluſion, juſt the contrary to our author's, viz. that on this ſcheme,

in all human probability, the intereſts of popery would *never* have declined at all; nor the ends of reformation been *at all* promoted.

The note *n*, p. 17, if I miſtake not the deſign of it, is to ſhow that ſubſcriptions are of no uſe in diſcovering the ſentiments of ſubſcribers, becauſe they do not give an inſight into the heart.—Which, I take it, is exactly the ſame as ſaying, That an oath is of no ſervice; becauſe a man may perjure himſelf; which is a method of arguing that I think needs not be confuted.—But even if this argument had any force in general, it would not hold here; becauſe though we expect that every man who ſubſcribes, ſhould do it *ex animo*; yet if his ſubſcription only operates ſo far as to influence his teaching, it is ſufficient for the ſecurity of the ſociety.—But further, his argumentation ſeems to deſtroy itſelf; becauſe he appears to ſuppoſe Timothy and Titus not endued with the power of diſcerning hearts, and yet he cannot deny but they required ſome teſtimony of the candidates "*holding the form of ſound words.*"—Nay, he himſelf acknowleges ſome declaration neceſſary; and yet no one form has more power than another to diſcover the heart.—As to his ſaying we muſt ſhow that they amplified and ſplit the apoſtolic confeſſion; that certainly is putting more upon us than is reaſonable.—All that we ſuppoſe is, that they uſed a form different from ſcripture; (i. e. an unſcriptural, not an anti-ſcriptural form;) if that be admitted, the propriety of the particulars thereof is another queſtion, and immaterial here to be diſcuſſed; becauſe if it was, as we ſuppoſe, an human form, it was alterable; and conſequently we are not bound to abide by it now.

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As to what follows, concerning the uſe of the fathers; and what Cartwright, Eraſmus, Johannes, Daillé, or any other have ſaid againſt them; we have only this to ſay, that every one, who thinks their opinions inconſiſtent with the goſpel doctrine, we hold at liberty, ſo far as he thinks them wrong, to diſſent from them; (nay, indeed, he cannot do otherwiſe;) and alſo, whoever thinks they have interpreted any portions of ſcripture right, muſt aſſent, in thoſe particulars, to their doctrines.—So that at laſt it comes to this, That as proteſtants, we are far from paying ſo great a regard to their authority, as to agree with them all, in every thing; or implicitly; as chriſtians, we cannot deny them our concurrence, where we judge them orthodox.—And therefore, as we ought not to pay them a blind implicit obedience; ſo neither ought we to reject them, by one general condemnation.—They are human writers; and therefore every man muſt judge of their works for himſelf; for, as to embrace all their opinions without examination, would be to yield them that implicit faith, which can be due to no human authority: ſo to reject them entirely, upon the credit of others, would be only tranſfering our implicit faith, from the fathers, to the modern oppoſers of the fathers.—For though ſuch oppoſers may have ſhown ſome of theſe ancient writers in ſome points to have been faulty; (as what meer man is free from error?) Yet, if we give them credit for any more objections than they have urged convincingly; there begins a tranſfer of our implicit faith.—Thus much may be enough for this matter in general; at leaſt at preſent.

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But we may add a few words on a particular paſſage or two in this part of our author's work; and firſt, on the following aſſertion of Eraſmus Johannes; quoted p. 21.—" *If any man, ſays he, finds himſelf obliged to uſe new terms to expreſs his articles of faith, ſo that the words of the prophets and apoſtles are not ſufficient for him, that man's doctrines and religion are certainty new, as well as his terms; for otherwiſe he would eaſily find, in the ſcriptures, language proper enough to expreſs his notions.*" This is meer aſſertion; and as ſuch would be properly enough anſwered by a meer negation.—But as we are unwilling to be thought deſirous of ſhifting off, and evaſion, we will endeavour to ſhow the aſſertion groundleſs.—To this end, let us aſk our author, if the end of expreſſing a man's thoughts in words, is not for the information of others; or to convey his own ideas to another? —We doubt not of his aſſent.—Suppoſe then a chriſtian wants to declare his ſenſe of ſome article of faith to another; for inſtance, of the ſcripture doctrine concerning the lord's ſupper; and that he finds the ſcripture words do not convey, what he thinks the right notion, to the other; becauſe he has reaſon to apprehend they underſtand them in different ſenſes.—In that caſe, muſt he leave the other in his error, or muſt he venture upon an explication in unſcriptural words? —If he does the latter, the ſchoolmaſter of Antwerp tells him, " *his doctrines and religion are certainly new*;" i. e. to be ſure he means *different* from ſcripture.—Now what a ſad caſe is this; that a man muſt either leave another in what he believes an error; or he muſt teach him what our ſchoolmaſter declares is " *certainly an error.*"— One cannot but be the more ſurprized at hearing ſuch

ſuch a ſentiment from a ſchoolmaſter; becauſe, to be ſure, whenever he explained an author in any other than his author's own words, he muſt be convinced by this maxim, that he was not giving his ſcholars the true ſenſe of the author.—If this maxim is true, ought we ever to have the ſcriptures in any other language than that the prophets and apoſtles delivered them in?—Or at leaſt, ought any tranſlation, once adopted, to be ever altered?—For to tranſlate is to *uſe new terms*.—Q. How does the approbation of this ſentiment agree with the latitude expreſſed by Le Clerc, and adopted by our author, p. 33.—where, after the words, "*en propres termes*," he adds, "*ou par des conſequences neceſſaires?*"

But our author tells us, in this ſame note, the difference between the defenders and oppoſers of eſtabliſhed confeſſions in unſcriptural words, conſiſts in the difference between the words *expreſſed* and *fixed*; and illuſtrates his meaning thus, viz. "*their difference with you is occaſioned by your pretending to* fix *the ſenſe of ſcripture, by new and unſcriptural words, in an eſtabliſhed confeſſion, to the excluſion of the right of private judgment; not by your endeavouring to* make the ſcripture more plain, *or more preciſe in a popular diſcourſe.*"—Now, for my part, I cannot ſee any kind of difference here to authorize a diſtinction between the two words.—For, in the firſt place, it has been aſſerted by Dr. Rutherforth, in a paſſage quoted, in this very note, that "*theſe new and unſcriptural words, are not uſed to* fix the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines, (by which the doctor evidently means, *not to fix the ſenſe with an infallible certainty,*) but *to fix the ſenſe in which ſcripture expreſſions are underſtood by the candidates.*"—Which, how often ſoever our author

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or any other may chuſe to call it an *unmeaning diſtinction*, is certainly a juſt one; if the *aſſerting a thing to be infallibly true*, and the *declaring our own opinion only concerning the truth of it*, be different things.—Beſides, our author has been told over and over again, that the eſtabliſhing a confeſſion, in a proteſtant church, does not in the leaſt take away the right of private judgment; nor was ever intended ſo to do.—Nay it evidently ſuppoſes private judgment; as the propoſing a confeſſion, and inflicting no puniſhment for refuſing to ſubſcribe it, plainly ſuppoſes a right of judging of it.—And conſequently the *fixing* the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines in a confeſſion, is as harmleſs to this right, as in a popular diſcourſe.

But, however, to determine this queſtion, whether there be any difference between *uſing new or unſcriptural terms or words to fix the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines*; and *uſing new or unſcriptural words to explain ſcripture*; (which *explaining ſcripture*, doubtleſs muſt mean *expreſſing what we think the true ſenſe of ſcripture*) let our author's own opinion be heard? He ſays, that biſhop Hoadley and the Antwerp ſchoolmaſter, maintained pretty nearly the ſame ſentiments.—Now he has told us, that biſhop Hoadley maintained, that new and unſcriptural words ought not to be uſed to *fix the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines*; and the ſchoolmaſter, we are told, aſſerts, that new and unſcriptural words ought not to be uſed to *expreſs the articles of Faith, i. e. the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines*.—From whence I conclude, there is no more difference between "fixing *and* expreſſing *the ſenſe of ſcripture doctrines*," than between the biſhop and the ſchoolmaſter. — And conſequently, what confeſſionaliſts, &c. pretend to differ with us about,

is really nothing more than the uſe of a word, which they will pretend to underſtand, in a ſenſe different from what we declare we uſe it in; and even from what, according to their own account, we uſe it in.—And after all, one would wonder how there can be any diſpute at all about this matter; becauſe, whether they will ſay we uſe ſubſcriptions in unſcriptural words to *fix* or to *expreſs* the ſenſe of ſcripture; they know that confeſſions are uſed as explications of ſcripture doctrines and teſts of principles, and therefore if they would but ſubſtitute, *explain* and *teſtify* inſtead of theſe obnoxious words, one would hope the diſpute would be at an end; unleſs they will maintain, that no other words are to be uſed in explaining a book, except the very individual words of the book itſelf.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

WE come next, Sir, to chapter 3. p. 58.—Where our author tells us, it has been objected, (and we are undoubtedly to ſuppoſe, that as he urges, he adopts the objection,) "*That confeſſions, in general, derogated from the authority and ſufficiency of the ſcriptures; that they encroached upon the liberty of private conſcience, and the independancy of proteſtant churches, and that they tended to nothing better than ſeparation and ſchiſm.*"—Inſtead of derogating from the authority of ſcriptures, we build the authority of confeſſions on their conformity to ſcripture; inſtead of derogating from the ſufficiency of ſcripture, we declare, that nothing ought

ought to be admitted, (as a neceſſary article of faith) into any confeſſion, which may not either be found in ſcripture in expreſs terms, or deduced from thence by neceſſary conſequence; which is our author's own tenet, p. 33.—That they encroach on the liberty of private conſcience, we equally deny; (i. e. in the church of England;) becauſe we lay no neceſſity on any, who do not approve them, to accept or uſe them.—Likewiſe we aſſert, that they cannot infringe on the independancy of other churches; becauſe they are only eſtabliſhed within our own confines; wherein ſurely no other church can claim juriſdiction; unleſs the church of England alone is to be deprived of independancy.—That they cannot juſtly be objected to, as tending to promote ſchiſm, may be very manifeſt to any who will conſider the nature of ſchiſm.—For ſchiſm is a cauſeleſs ſeparation from the communion of a lawfully eſtabliſhed church.—Now if any do ſeparate from the church of England, (for inſtance) *cauſeleſsly*, the confeſſion certainly is not to be blamed for this; but they who cauſeleſsly ſeparate.—And if any church ſhould require unlawful terms of communion, and ſo give cauſe for a ſeparation, then ſuch ſeparation is not ſchiſm: for if it were, how ſhould we and all proteſtants, defend ourſelves from the charge of ſchiſm in ſeparating from the church of Rome?—It is plain therefore, that the guilt of ſchiſm cannot juſtly be charged on confeſſions in general; nor on ours in particular, by any but thoſe who maintain, that our terms of communion are unlawful.

If the remonſtrants maintain that ſcriptural phraſes and terms of ſpeaking are ſufficient for the inſtruction of unlearned and ordinary chriſtians

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in all ages, without any explanations; we muſt differ from them; as we think this would exclude all neceſſity of teaching, and even of tranſlating the ſcriptures; and conſequently, as we differ from them here, we are under no obligation to diſentangle them from any perplexities, they may have drawn themſelves into hereby.

P. 61. Our author aſks, "*If the ſcriptures are opened and explained to the people in eaſy and familiar expreſſions, by their ordinary paſtors, what poſſible uſe can you find for a ſyſtematical* CONFESSIONAL?" (N. B. We ſuppoſe it ſhould have been printed *Confeſſion.*) We anſwer; if the teachers teach right doctrines it is well.—But is not this the effect of ſubſcription, by excluding improper miniſters?—Again, without a confeſſion and ſubſcription, we have no means to ſecure their concontinuance in well doing; nor to remove them if they introduce error.—Much leſs could we be ſecured as to their ſucceſſors without ſuch teſts as above?—So that our author's queſtion is juſt as good an argument againſt confeſſions as it would be againſt eſtabliſhing civil laws or a ſettled government, to ſay, "*If your people are peaceable and quiet, what poſſible uſe can you find for laws or government?*"—For the right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions appears to me juſt as much connected with teaching, as legiſlative authority with executive power.—To the argument in the next paragraph we anſwer, that the compariſon is not fairly ſtated.—The difference aſſerted in the ſecond part thereof is not real.—For opinions reduced to a fixed form and ſubſcribed, do not, as to lawfulneſs and utility, put on a different aſpect, when viewed in the light we have placed them in; unleſs that the concurrence of a number

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of men (ſuppoſed to be judicious and honeſt) may recommend their opinions more than that of a ſingle perſon of like quality; but this, I fancy, will not be urged as an argument againſt their lawfulneſs; except it be ſaid, that one man may indeed lawfully make public profeſſion of his faith; but two, three, or a greater number, may not lawfully do ſo.—Neither will this concurrence of a number of men in the ſame profeſſion be urged, I ſuppoſe, as an argument againſt its utility; unleſs the utility decreaſes in proportion to the encreaſe of the number of thoſe who believe they profit by it.—And hence I conclude, that as to lawfulneſs and utility, ſubſcribed forms do not put on a different aſpect from the declared ſentiments of ſingle men; at leaſt not a leſs advantageous one.—In this caſe, all examination is *not* precluded, though our author aſſerts it is; but it is rather *ſuppoſed*.—And if it be true that no ſubſcriber is impowered to explain, or correct for the reſt, in one caſe; it muſt be ſo in the other too.—For if he means that no ſubſcriber may give his opinion, as a private perſon to a friend, concerning the meaning of eſtabliſhed confeſſions; we deny the aſſertion.—If he means, that one ſubſcriber may not explain or correct for the reſt, with authority; the aſſertion is equally true in both caſes.—But however, what will, I apprehend, pleaſe our author as well is, That in either caſe, each ſubſcriber may explain, and if not correct, at leaſt reject, for himſelf.—As to a man's ſtanding in the light of a ſchiſmatic to his brethren, if he retracts; we may obſerve that what has been ſaid a little above concerning the nature of ſchiſm, will enable us to judge whether he be really a ſchiſmatic or not; if he is, he

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ought to be thought ſo; if he is not, his ſtanding in that light to others, whom, we muſt ſuppoſe, he himſelf thinks no better of, will not, I conclude, much hurt him.—But in either caſe, this conſequence would be the ſame; as I fancy a man who retracts any opinions maintained in a confeſſion he has once eſpouſed, would be held in no worſe light by thoſe who approve that confeſſion, than he who rejects the doctrines of any ſingle teacher, whom the ſame perſons eſteem orthodox.

P. 62, our author tells us, that "*the matter of complaint is, That the agreement of confeſſions with truth, reaſon and ſcripture, ſhould be pre-determined by the deciſion of theſe leading ſubſcribers, in ſuch ſort, as to diſcourage all free examination, and conſtrain the people to acquieſce in a precarious ſyſtem, by the mere influence of great names and reſpectable authorities.*"—We have repeated over and over again, that we do *not* diſcourage free examination; we have alſo frequently reminded our author, that none is *conſtrained* (in the proper ſenſe of the word) to acquieſce in our confeſſion, who diſapproves it; neither can he call that a precarious ſyſtem, which he has often complained of as a *fixed form*.—If he uſes the word *conſtrained* in ſo low and improper a ſenſe, as only to expreſs the influence that ariſes from the example and commendation of perſons of reſpectable character; we are ready to acknowledge, that our confeſſions are indeed thus *enforced*; but if that be any objection, we apprehend, it will lay equally againſt every ſcripture doctrine, and chriſtian virtue.—So that we muſt beg leave to diſſent from our author's concluſion, that "*the* expedience *of*

confeſſions does in no wiſe appear from the foregoing general conſiderations."

P. 64, our author tells us that, "*Formularies of doctrine perplex and confound things that are clear and plain.*"—What appears perplexed and confounded to one, very often appears clear and plain to another; and *vice verſâ*.—But would it not be hard in thoſe who deſpiſe ſuch helps, to deny the uſe of them to thoſe of plain underſtandings, who apprehend they are profited by them?—Again, ſays our author, "*ſome opinions have been condemned by creeds and confeſſions, which have been maintained by ſolid reaſoning.*"—Now this aſſertion, our author will, I am ſure, allow, can never be acknowledged to hold good againſt any particular confeſſion, by thoſe who maintain as good, and adhere to that confeſſion; ſo that every church may ſay, "*It has no force againſt us; and we have nothing to do with any confeſſion but our own.*"—Further, ſays our author, "*If confeſſions are profitable towards ſuppreſſing noxious errors, it muſt be needful to enlarge them as often as ſuch errors ariſe.*"—If any new errors ariſe of importance enough to be the occaſion of an alteration in the confeſſion, we do not deny the aſſertion; but of this they muſt judge to whom it belongs.—But perhaps new errors or new hereſies are not ſo common as ſome may imagine.—A new coat does not make a new man.—And perhaps many parts of diſquiſitions, appeals and confeſſionals might find reſemblances among the productions of Q. Elizabeth's days, and of the laſt century; if thoſe productions were to appear in modern dreſs.—And conſequently for ſuch caſes there may be found excellent antidotes in the old confeſſions.—That this is really true, may appear from

from the next aſſertion, viz. that "*there is ſcarce a year paſſes without bringing forth ſome new opinion, or* reviving *ſome* old one, *with new circumſtances contrary to, or at leaſt differing from the approved, and orthodox ſyſtem.*"—As to the matter of fact, we entirely agree with our author; and if he pleaſe ſo far to agree with us, we will join with him in lamenting it too.—And, by the bye, let us conſider, what a comfortable proſpect, in ſuch times, muſt be opened, were we to lay aſide confeſſions;—would it not be much like unroofing an houſe in a ſtorm; or opening the gates of a city to the beſiegers?—But as to the conſequence drawn from this fact, viz. that "*therefore there ought to be annual alterations in our confeſſions*; we entirely diſſent; and herein the very ſtate of the caſe confirms our opinion; for theſe opinions are all ſuppoſed to be *contrary to, or at leaſt different from the approved and orthodox ſyſtem*; therefore, let them be ever ſo new, or inveſted with ever ſo many new circumſtances, they are ſufficiently provided againſt by our preſent confeſſion; for by *different* he muſt mean *eſſentially, or at leaſt importantly different*; and certainly whatever is *contrary to, or eſſentially different from* the approved and orthodox ſyſtem, is effectually condemned by that ſyſtem.

P. 66.—"*What is become of all thoſe hereſies, againſt which none of theſe public proviſions have been made?*" ſays our author.—By *public proviſions*, he muſt doubtleſs mean, *condemnations exhibited in public confeſſions*; and if ſo, I much wonder at the queſtion; becauſe, I thought nothing had been properly termed an hereſy until it had been publickly condemned by ſome church, or ſome confeſſion of faith.—But not to dwell upon this cir-

cumſtance, we anſwer, that whatever hereſy or falſe doctrine, or whatever we call it, is not contrary to what we eſteem the orthodox ſyſtem, we have no buſineſs to trouble our heads about; and whatever doctrine is contrary thereto, certainly ſtands condemned thereby.—As to ſuch as are "*ſunk into utter oblivion, as if they had never been*;" 'tis impoſſible for our author or us to prove any thing about them; becauſe, by ſuppoſition, we know nothing about them; and conſequently 'tis needleſs to ſay any thing about them.—With regard to ſuch as have had (as our author ſays) no worſe effect than innocent problems; we can have no room to complain of them; that is to ſay, if we are convinced of their being innocent. But when, in p. 67, we find our author drawing concluſions from theſe laſt-mentioned premiſes concerning hereſies, different from thoſe mentioned in the ſaid premiſes, we muſt remind him, that no logicians will allow ſuch concluſions.—His argument, however, if I underſtand it, ſtands thus, viz. That ſome hereſies have ſunk into oblivion, and others, though freely debated, have been innocent; though both were uncondemned by any confeſſion.—And from hence he concludes, That therefore, hereſies of a *different kind* (viz. "*other hereſies*;" and I ſuppoſe he means all hereſies; becauſe, by his plan, none are to be condemned; that hereſies of another kind, I ſay,) owe the continuance of their exiſtence, and even their malignity, to the notice taken of them in ſome confeſſion; or, in other words, would have been forgotten or harmleſs, had they never been condemned.—Now, in the firſt place, as to ſuch as have ſunk into oblivion in the manner here deſcribed, as was obſerved above,

above, we cannot ſay what was the cauſe of ſuch oblivion, becauſe we know nothing about them; even not ſo much as whether there ever exiſted ſuch.—In the next place, as to ſuch as have been freely debated, and even yet are maintained by ſome (for, by ſuppoſition, they are not forgotten, as to ſuch, I ſay,) I cannot get any idea how they can have been, or can be innocent; becauſe, let us differ as widely as we will about what particular opinions are, or are not hereſies, I fancy we ſhall all agree, that real hereſies are noxious in religion; and conſequently, how few ſoever have maintained, or do maintain them, the religion of thoſe perſons muſt be corrupted thereby.—So that the exiſtence of innocent hereſies, I think one may deny.—But ſuppoſe we allow the expreſſion to be changed, and inſtead of hereſies, call them heterodox opinions; (though I think they can hardly be called ſo, if condemned by no fixed formulary) or if we go ſo low as to call them erroneous opinions, they muſt either be hurtful or unimportant; the former deſtroys the ſuppoſition of their innocence; the latter is a good reaſon why they have been unnoticed by confeſſions.—But ſuppoſe we could imagine theſe hereſies or erroneous notions, to have been, or to be innocent, though uncondemned, our author will yet, by no means, be entitled to his concluſion; becauſe his concluſion is about quite other ſort of things, viz. about real and malignant hereſies; and though the former ſhould remain harmleſs, when uncondemned, that is far from being any proof that theſe would.—Nay, I think one may eaſily be convinced of quite the contrary; becauſe, he ſuppoſes they are now malignant; they muſt therefore have been ſo,

tho' they had remained uncondemned; (not to ſay infinitely more ſo;) becauſe, if an opinion is of no malignant nature, antecedent to its condemnation, it's being condemned does not (as far as I can ſee) nor cannot poſſibly make it ſo; if it was antecedently malignant, its malignity cannot be owing to the condemnation.—That ſuch hereſies are perpetuated by being noticed, is only a bare aſſertion; and if it have any force, muſt hold good againſt oppoſing any error whatever; becauſe theſe hereſies are ſuppoſed to be malignant; and if ſuch are to be left unnoticed, for fear of perpetuating them, I do not ſee what corruption need be oppoſed.—But however, ſince our author has given an inſtance or two (as I underſtand) to ſupport his aſſertion, we ought to conſider them; and they appear to me very concluſive againſt the aſſertion.—He aſſerts, "*that the notice taken of hereſies in confeſſions, perpetuates their exiſtence.*"—And yet he tells us, that our not condemning Origen's opinion, concerning the temporary duration of future puniſhments, has been the occaſion of many diſquiſitions on that ſubject.—He tells us alſo, That our not condemning the notion of the ſoul's ſleeping, was probably the occaſion of Dr. Law's writing on that ſubject.—Now if our author is right in his conjecture, that theſe writings had never appeared, if theſe two opinions had ſtill been condemned; then it follows, that theſe two opinions, (which to many worthy and learned men appear malignant errors,) would not have been perpetuated meerly by being *noticed*; becauſe, on the contrary, according to our author, their exiſtence *is* perpetuated, probably by their being *unnoticed.*

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As to his aſſerting, p. 69. that with regard to certain points there mention'd, it is in vain to expect any relief from confeſſions; this is, I think, only begging the queſtion; for thoſe who maintain the utility of confeſſions do thereby deny this aſſertion; and how many abuſes ſoever confeſſions are accuſed of, they muſt paſs for nothing with thoſe, who are not convinc'd they are rightly accus'd; which muſt be the caſe of every confeſſion, with reſpect to it's own defenders.—

In the ſame page 69. our author tells us that, "*another uſe of confeſſions urged by the remonſtrants is, to obviate foul and diſhoneſt ſlanders*;" and then endeavours to ſhow that they do not anſwer this end; and goes on to p. 75.—with particular animadverſions on the remonſtrants, with which we have nothing to do; and ſhall therefore only ſay a word or two to what is general therein, viz. his endeavouring to prove that confeſſions are not in general of ſervice for the purpoſe here mentioned.—And in anſwer hereto, we ſhall only obſerve, that this is the very caſe which, according to our author, p. 5. —"*laid the proteſtants under a* neceſſity *of publiſhing to the whole world, explicit confeſſions of their faith, and doctrine.*"—And whatever is *neceſſary*, we always think uſeful.—Nay, and in that ſame page, our author acknowledges, that they, "*by this means, acquited themſelves, in the opinion of impartial judges.*"—Conſequently our author, at the time of writing, p. 5. was of the ſame opinion with the remonſtrants; and what makes him differ in page 70. we know not.—

All that need further be ſaid, on this head of utility, I think is briefly to take a view of the ill conſequences of laying aſide confeſſions.—And theſe we ſhall not be at a loſs to diſcover, if we look back to ſome of the uſes to which we have above ſhown, that confeſſions may profitably be applied.—Since if we were right therein, as we hope our reaſoning has evinced, then the diſuſe of theſe formularies muſt occaſion the want of all thoſe advantages.—And hence, for inſtance, we could expect no edification in public worſhip; for want of a ſettled form of worſhip; which we have ſhown above muſt refer to the articles of faith and doctrine, held by the worſhipers; and which conſequently could not be ſo contrived as to ſuit thoſe of ſuch different ſentiments as many hold, alaſs! who all call themſelves chriſtians.—Hence alſo could we expect no edification from teaching; ſince if there were no confeſſion there could be no way of knowing the principles of the teachers; nor indeed any ground to reject any that offered as candidates for the miniſtry, if there were no ſtandard to try them by; neither could there be any equity in diſplacing thoſe who were actually found to teach the groſſeſt errors, if there were no rule to regulate their teaching. Nay, and if there were no method eſtabliſhed to appoint proper teachers, it ſeems ſelf-evident, that no edification could ariſe to the hearers; ſince they might one day hear one ſet of doctrines praiſed and defended, and the contrary reprobated and diſproved; the next day they might hear the directly contrary propoſitions aſſerted, and endeavoured to be proved.—And amidſt ſuch confuſion, and withal ſuch warmth

warmth and paſſion as we might expect each to exhibit, where muſt the unlearned hearer place his confidence, or how could he place it any where, without many miſgiving doubts, and perplexing fears?—Hence too ſhould we be led to conclude all teaching and preaching unneceſſary, nay I had almoſt ſaid unlawful; for if it be uſeleſs or unlawful to have the principal points of chriſtianity laid before us in a well digeſted ſet of propoſitions, put together and compared with ſcripture, by ſome of the principal men in the church, examined and approved of by the reſt, explained and defended by writers of the firſt rank; it muſt certainly be much more uſeleſs and unlawful to hear any one point of doctrine taught by a ſingle perſon; unleſs we will maintain that one ſingle learned man is more able to teach and inſtruct others, than that ſame man aided by others every way his equals, if not ſuperiors.—Nay, if we were to lay aſide confeſſions, what religious principles at all, could we expect to find, amongſt the generality of mankind; whoſe ſituation in life and abilities would not enable them, by their own powers, to diſcover even the moſt neceſſary points of religion?—For if the uſe of confeſſions were to be laid aſide, how could the uſe of catechiſms, or other pious tracts be allowed; or if they were, muſt they not neceſſarily be compoſed in ſuch utter diſſonance and oppoſition, that the poor pupils, to whom they ſhould be recommended, would be bewildered, unedified, nay unſettled, or often ſadly miſlead. —Nay if confeſſions were to be condemned, what could be ſaid in defence of any explanation of any of the harder parts of ſcripture;

or what could be ſaid for tranſlating ſcripture at all; ſince it is well known that a falſe gloſs or falſe interpretation of a text of ſcripture may countenance an erroneous doctrine, full as much as the admitting an erroneous article of faith into a confeſſion; ſince both are equally ſubject to the examination of thoſe of ability?—And conſequently if none have a right to lay before the members of their own church, or even before others, an account of what they think true doctrines, or if there be not ſome utility in ſo doing; who can have any right to offer to the public an explanation or tranſlation of ſcripture; or what utility could there be in ſo doing?—Nay indeed, if we are to have no confeſſion, how can we have any church? How can any ſociety ſubſiſt without laws?—Is it not a contradiction in terms, to ſuppoſe a ſet of men united; but united by no particular engagements?—Not to mention the heterogeneous mixture between thoſe who all call themſelves proteſtants, how could we exclude even the papiſts themſelves?—Which is ſo obvious and immediate a conſequence of laying aſide confeſſions, that I am amaz'd it ſhould eſcape our author's obſervation. If no teſt of orthodoxy were required, what could hinder any papiſt from coming into the church, nay into the miniſtry?—No act of the civil power could do it, according to our author's principles; becauſe all interfering of the civil or even eccleſiaſtical authority, to appropriate the emoluments of the miniſtry to one particular manner of doing the work is, in his opinion, unjuſtifiable.—Not to mention, that, where there is no eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, the civil power

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can neither, as far as I can ſee, admit to, nor exclude from the miniſtry; becauſe I think there could be no miniſtry; nor even religious principles.—And how long or how happily a civil ſociety could ſubſiſt, without religious principles, any judicious man may very eaſily determine; if he can determine how long any ſociety can ſubſiſt without any ſufficient ſanction to enforce obedience to its laws.—But thoſe who pay any regard to experience may eaſily ſatisfy themſelves how judicious it would be to lay aſide our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, by recurring to the hiſtories of thoſe times when the experiment was made, under the auſpice of a *Cromwell*, and if they like the manner in which chriſtianity was then profeſs'd in this nation, probably to ſuch perſons any thing we can ſay in defence of an eſtabliſhment, would be ineffectual; if they like it not, more than has already been ſaid will, I apprehend, be needleſs.—Let the hiſtories alſo of thoſe Times, when popery has had the upper hand amongſt us, determine whether any proteſtant can wiſh, or indeed would not tremble, to ſee thoſe fences pulled down, which are the barriers between us and that moſt corrupt of all churches, that call themſelves chriſtians.—For if we had no marks of diſtinction to keep them from mixing with and corrupting our flocks, and if the majority of our flocks had caught the contagion, what laws, what civil eſtabliſhment, could withſtand the attempts of thoſe, who neither ſcruple to attain their ends by open violence, nor ſecret malice?—What can we conclude then, but that if it is adviſeable to keep religion free from errors and corruption, and to ſecure civil ſociety

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from anarchy, and tyranny, we ought to adhere to that middle ſyſtem, which is equally diſtant from popery, and independency; from implicit faith and paſſive obedience on one ſide, and from ſcepticiſm, contempt of authority and confuſion on the other.—For if we deviate from hence, even on what we think the ſafer ſide, it is odds that we not only run upon the rock we wilfully approach too near, but alſo recoil upon that we were ſtriving to keep at the utmoſt diſtance from;—as extreams are very apt to run into each other.—I am Sir, &c.—

LETTER X.

HAVING now, Sir, I hope, ſufficiently conſidered what our author has advanced, againſt the lawfulneſs and utility of eſtabliſhing confeſſions of faith, let us next enquire into his opinions concerning the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of a latitude of interpretation in ſubſcribing.—Perhaps an impartial enquirer will think this point ſo ſufficiently eſtabliſh'd by biſhop *Burnet*, that it is needleſs to ſay any more on that ſubject; nor ſhould we think it needful were it not to remove the objections of our author againſt the biſhop's ſentiments herein, which if paſſed over in ſilence, we might appear to aſſent to.—We are told that his lordſhip allows a latitude inconſiſtent with the expreſs deſign for which the articles were agreed upon; viz. "*to avoid the diverſities of opinions*;"—now we are told that if this latitude of ſubſcription is admitted of, it muſt introduce diverſity of opinion.—Very true,

true, and yet this would not contradict the design of the articles at all.—For it is not said that they were agreed upon to avoid *all* diversity of opinion; but only *the diverſities*, i. e. ſuch as were thought *neceſſary to be avoided*.—For there may be many differences of opinion, which do not obſtruct mutual charity and edification; and ſuch it was not neceſſary to avoid.—So that if ſubſcription to theſe articles prevent ſuch diverſities of opinions, as it was intended to avoid, it anſwers the end deſigned.—And let not this be called quibbling upon the expreſſion, both becauſe the whole argument depends upon the exact ſenſe of the expreſſion, and becauſe our author himſelf was ſo ſenſible, that the omiſſion of the word *all* was material; that p. 86.—before he proceeds to attempt to prove the inconſiſtency alledged, from this expreſſion, he ſuppoſes the word *all* to be underſtood; which we think we have far better grounds to ſuppoſe, was never intended to be underſtood; both becauſe ſome doctrines are deſignedly left undetermined; and alſo becauſe not every article was deſigned to be limited to one particular ſenſe, even by the compilers, but only to expreſs a general one,—as we ſhall ſee by and by; and conſequently *all* diverſity of opinion in theſe points was never intended to be avoided.—And hence appears alſo, how ill grounded the objection is, that ſuch a latitude would not have ſatisfied the compilers; for our author acknowleges, that amongſt them were men of different opinions; who conſequently muſt each of them, both have underſtood the words of the articles ſo as to be conſiſtent with their own opinions, and alſo muſt have intended

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that others ſhould underſtand them ſo too; otherwiſe they would never have either ſubſcribed them themſelves, nor required others to ſubſcribe them.—We need only inſtance in thoſe points where our author himſelf acknowledges a diverſity of opinion was not intended to be avoided by the articles, viz. concerning *Origen*'s opinion of the temporary duration of future puniſhments, and concerning the ſleep of the ſoul, and likewiſe concerning the real preſence, which he tells us, p. 110. was deſignedly left ambiguous.—And if more particular opinions than one are allowed in one or two inſtances, why ſhould they not in others, equally conſiſtent with charity and edification, where the literal ſenſe without a forced conſtruction will allow it.—

Neither is it more to the purpoſe to ſay, that the law requires ſubſcription in one fixed ſenſe; there being no mention made (that I know of) of the ſenſe, in any ſtatute requiring ſubſcription.—If by the law we mean the words of the ſtatutes relating to ſubſcription, they require only the outward act, and conſequently he who ſubſcribes and declares as there required, fulfills the ſtatute, i. e. the letter of the law, though he ſhould not in his own mind aſſent to one of the articles.—If by *the law* is meant the ſenſe or intention of the law; then muſt not that be taken from the makers of it? And if ſo, we may argue as we have done concerning the ſenſe of the compilers, that their opinions might be, and moſt likely were different; and that they intended, in ſome points, only to eſtabliſh general doctrines, leaving room for difference of ſentiment as to particulars.—

Yet if there are any who ſtill think the biſhop's ſentiments, concerning latitude of expreſſion, cannot be defended; and are perſuaded that the articles ought to be ſigned in one and the ſame particular ſenſe by all ſubſcribers; they muſt find out, if they can, what that ſenſe is, then we readily (according to biſhop *Andrews*'s argument in biſhop *Neale*'s caſe,) allow, that all who are ſo perſuaded, ought to ſubſcribe in that ſenſe only.—But we ſee no right ſuch perſons have to accuſe others of prevarication, who are equally convinced of their right to ſubſcribe, with greater latitude of interpretation.—

Let us now, Sir, proceed to attend to our author in ſome particulars of chapter iv.—And in this chapter he ſeems, to me, to be ſomewhat embarraſſed, being willing to oppoſe biſhop *Burnet*'s opinion of the lawfulneſs of ſubſcribing in a literal and grammatical ſenſe; and yet deſirous to avoid weakening the credit of a perſon whoſe authority he often quotes in behalf of his own opinions.—Now this it muſt be owned was no eaſy taſk, becauſe if the biſhop's ſentiments are erroneous in ſo capital, and well-weighed a work; how can they be depended on in other places? Or if our author may chooſe where he will follow his lordſhip, and where he will deſpiſe this guide; why may not others do the ſame? However let us ſee how he proceeds in this undertaking.—He attempts to ſhow that what the biſhop has written in behalf of this latitude was not his own ſentiments, but wrote meerly in compliance with queen *Mary*'s and arch-biſhop *Tillotſon*'s requeſt.—Now, not to mention that the opinions of her majeſty and theſe two prelates probably were known to each

other

other to be pretty much the ſame, on the principal points of religion, and particularly in the tenets to be maintain'd in the expoſition; as one may reaſonably conjecture from two of them pitching upon the third to engage in this work, and the third's accepting the engagement; not to mention this, I ſay, whether is it moſt for the credit of the queen and the archbiſhop, to ſuppoſe they requeſted the biſhop to maintain principles he thought wrong; or for him to engage in ſo doing?—Is not this maintaining the biſhop's rectitude of judgment, (i. e. according to our author's ſentiments,) at the expence of his integrity?—And what weight this defence, even if well-grounded, would give to his lordſhip's authority, I leave the impartial to conclude.—But our author is aware, that the deceaſe of the two perſonages abovementioned, before publication, would invalidate the objection; and therefore he adds the influence of arch-biſhop *Tenniſon*, and the other biſhops.—This is indeed making the good biſhop the tool of every one.—And even admitting the allegation, it would clearly prove the opinions there defended.—But we are told that a qualifing preface was added.—Very well.—Now if this preface retracts the opinions delivered in the work itſelf, why was the work publiſhed at all?—If it does not retract them; then they may ſtill juſty be thought to be his lordſhip's real opinions.—But what need is there to believe his lordſhip's integrity in any wiſe impeached?—The expectation of many attacks, to which his friends admoniſhed him he was likely to be expoſed, might ſufficiently account for his backwardneſs in ſuch an undertaking; and his own modeſty

modeſty and diffidence concerning his own work, together with his experience of the unwillingneſs of ſome contending parties, to admit of any accommodation, that was not intirely equivalent to a victory, might alſo ſufficiently account for the preface, ſince I find nothing thence quoted by our author, that amounts to more, than a fear that his endeavours might not be ſo ſucceſful as he wiſhed.—I muſt declare therefore, that I have ſo good an opinion of his lordſhip's integrity, that I look upon ſo deliberate and well-weighed a publication, as a ſufficient proof, that he really both thought the requiring ſubſcriptions lawful and uſeful, and alſo that ſubſcribers had a juſt right to avail themſelves of the latitude allowed by adhering to the literal grammatical ſenſe, and that if he had been of a different opinion, nothing would have prevailed with him to have wrote and publiſhed his expoſition; and therefore whatever ſlight expreſſions, ſeemingly to the contrary, our author may have produced, I am pretty well ſatisfied might either be reconciled to this opinion, if we had time to examine them; or perhaps were expreſſions which his great moderation led him to utter, without ſufficiently having weighed the conſequences.—Be this as it will, the arguments for the lawfulneſs of ſuch a latitude in ſubſcription, muſt operate on the mind of individuals according to their own conceptions of their validity, independent of the biſhop's authority.—And therefore we might have paſſed by all vindication of his lordſhip's integrity, had not ſo great a character ſeemed to demand this ſlight tribute.—

One cannot but obſerve the different lights in which the ſame matter can be placed, on dif-

ferent occaſions, when we ſee our author, p. 78. —taking the biſhop's work, or at leaſt his ſentiments therein, as a fair repreſentation of the doctrines of the church of *England*, in order that if his principles can be invalidated, the principles of that church may ſeem to ſhare the ſame fate; whereas in p. 82.—we ſee him quoting his lordſhip's preface, to prove that his expoſition is not a work of authority; in order doubtleſs to attempt to ſhow that thoſe who ſubſcribe in his ſenſe, have no right to avail themſelves of his expoſition, as a ſufficient authority.--

In page 83.—Our author ſays, "*poſſibly he* "[Tillotſon] *might think they* [*ſubſcriptions*] *were* "*unwarrantable impoſitions.*"—Of the *poſſibility* I will ſay nothing here; except that if it is to be judged of by the *probability*; the reader may ſatisfy himſelf, that even our author thinks this conjecture *highly improbable*; if he will pleaſe to read note *g*. on this ſame page.—

We cannot agree with our author's remark on the quotation from biſhop *Burnet*, p. 86. viz. "*That they who ſubſcribed the articles, when they* "*were firſt ſet out, did either believe them to be true,* "*or elſe they did groſsly prevaricate.*"—On which our author ſays, "*now if they believed them to be* "*true, they certainly believed them to be true in* one "preciſe uniform ſenſe; *that is to ſay in a ſenſe* "excluſive *of* all *diverſity of opinion, as the title* "*of the articles plainly imports.*"—For we do not agree herein, becauſe we apprehend we have ſhown above, that neither were the compilers all of one opinion, nor did they intend to exclude *all* diverſity of opinion; and alſo, we hope, we have ſhown that the title of the articles does not import the excluſion of *all* diverſity, though our

author

author, here aſſerts it, and for that purpoſe ſlips in the word *all*; tho' the real title is, " The di-" verſities of opinions;" which ſeems plainly to allude to ſome particular opinions. Again,

Page 87. our author ſays, " *when were they* " *(viz. what he calls trimming methods in matters* " *of religion,) known to ſucceed?—And where* " *were they ever known to conciliate the minds of* " *any one of thoſe unreaſonable zealots, to whoſe* " *humor they were accommodated?*"—I agree with our author that it is very difficult to conciliate the mind of an *unreaſonable zealot*; even if you give them all they wiſh.—And therefore I am not for having reaſonable men to part with reaſonable eſtabliſhments, or even to weaken them, to oblige any ſuch perſons.—But yet I cannot but wonder ſuch queries, as theſe ſhould fall from a pen employed in pleading for one of the moſt extenſive accommodations that perhaps ever was or ever will be pleaded for.—

Page 100.—Our author expects " *a good ac-* " *count by what authority additions have been made,* " *in latter times, to ancient confeſſions, or creeds.*" And ſays, " *to this the good biſhop anſwers no other-* " *wiſe than by giving us a detail of thoſe growing* " *hereſies, which occaſioned ſuch enlargements.*"—Now I cannot but think this a very good account. For we muſt argue on our author's admiſſion, page 99. " *that there has been a formulary of* " *apoſtolical authority, and that ſome of thoſe creeds* " *which the earlier fathers have left us, were form-* " *ed after the model of it.*"—Now I take it the method of working after a model, is to make ſomething conſiſting of the ſame principal parts, but upon an enlarged plan.—Hence I infer, that thoſe *earlier* fathers enlarged upon the apoſtle's

plan, ſtill preſerving the ſame principal parts; and whatever right they had ſo to do, their ſucceſſors, the church governors, muſt have had, if occaſion required to enlarge upon them; becauſe by looking back to page 96, our author will find that his lordſhip ſuppoſes theſe formularies, (whoſe exiſtence he allows,) to admit *ſuch variations as the caſes and ſituations of particular churches demanded.*"—And if they were variable according to different caſes and ſituations, at one time, muſt they not vary likewiſe as thoſe caſes and ſituations varied at different times?—All that remains then is to ſhow that the occaſions really demanded the enlargements made in latter times; and that they did ſo, we think his lordſhip's detail of growing hereſies, muſt be a proper and ſufficient teſtimony, even in our author's opinion; becauſe he admits the like cauſe to have laid a *neceſſity* on the firſt reformers, to "*publiſh to the whole world* explicit "*confeſſions of their faith and doctrine.*"—page 5. —And therefore how juſt ſoever his lordſhip's reflection quoted in page 100, may be, viz. "*that it had been an invaluable bleſſing, if the "chriſtian religion had been kept in it's firſt ſimplicity*;" we are not to ſuppoſe that he means to reckon it the fault of thoſe, who eſtabliſhed confeſſions, that it was not kept ſo, but of thoſe who raiſed up hereſies; who our author himſelf ſays, laid proteſtants under a neceſſity of publiſhing confeſſions.—

It ſeems very odd to me, that our author ſhould ſay, page 103, that the apoſtles "*left "the calumny to be confronted by the goſpel hiſtory, "and the tenor of their own writings and converſations*;" and yet in note *x.* in the ſame page,

admit,

admit, that St. *Paul* " *denounces condemnation on* " *the ſlanderers*;"—certainly this is doing ſomething more than leaving the calumny to be confronted as above.—And whether our author chooſes to think the denunciation appears in the form of a canon or an article, the deſign is evidently the ſame, viz. that it ſhould be known, that the apoſtle teaches, that it is unlawful to do evil for the ſake of procuring good.—

Page 104. To prove that the meaſu rerecommended in the 1ſt paragraph of this page, viz. " *barely pleading the authority of ſcripture*," would not have produced the effect here mentioned, we examine the Confeſſional, page 5, ſo often referred to.—

Ibid.—That biſhop *Jewell*'s apology did it's work as well without ſubſcription, as our articles with it, is the very point in queſtion; and it cannot be doubted but the very reaſon why the latter was ſubſtituted in the room of the former, was that the work might be better done; and therefore our author's aſſertion, cannot be eſteemed any thing but a begging the queſtion.—What follows page 105.—about ſetting confeſſions up as teſts of orthodoxy, and binding them on men's conſciences, has been ſo often conſidered above, and we hope ſufficiently anſwered, that it would be tedious to repeat it.—Ibid. " *If* " *any of theſe ſects, ſays our author, were impious* " *or extravagant in their tenets, might not ſome of* " *this be owing to the intolerant ſpirit of ſome of the* " *reformers themſelves?*"—Alas! alas! what a ſad crime muſt the uſe of a confeſſion be! when thoſe who are guilty of it muſt bear the blame of every impious and extravagant tenet adopted by others!—And yet one would have hoped they

were not to have anſwered for impious and extravagant fanatics; becauſe our author ſays, that ſuch "*probably the moſt reaſonable terms of communion, would not have reſtrained.*"—page 4.—

Page 106. —*To ſay that theſe impious ſectaries ſpoke out what all proteſtants thought, was ſo ridiculous and abſurd, it deſerved no other anſwer but an appeal to the actual ſeparation of one from another.* And yet might it not ſtill have been ſaid, that the ſeparation was only occaſioned by telling ſecrets.—But if it deſerved no other anſwer, how happens it that a different judgment is paſſed on this very matter, page 5, ſo often quoted?—However it ſeems acknowledged here, that there would have been impious ſectaries, and ought to have been a ſeparation of one ſort of proteſtants from another, though there had been no confeſſions.—

Page 107.—Whether ſo great a variety of ſects would have exiſted, if the infallibility of the church of *Rome* had continued to be univerſally acknowledged cannot be ſaid indeed; but that many do now exiſt in that church, may juſtly be ſaid.—

We are next told that becauſe ſome men in king *Henry* and *Edward*'s reigns complied with every alteration, and yet afterwards declared they were all the while papiſts, and became bloody perſecutors, therefore "*queen Elizabeth's biſhops were* "*by no means juſtified in continuing a teſt*;" p. 110. and again, "*nothing can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe* "*that the compilers of any other articles,* {*viz.* than "king *Edward*'s,} *ſhould profit by their experience* "*of what happened in the reigns of* Henry, Edward, *and* Mary."—page 111.—Now according to my judgment, nothing could better juſtify

queen

queen *Elizabeth*'s biſhops in requiring the beſt and ſtrongeſt teſt they could contrive, than to have ſeen that ſome men's conſciences would allow them to temporize ſo ſcandalouſly; and alſo I really think nothing more natural than for the compilers of a ſet of articles, to profit by their experience.—In ſhort, if this ſort of arguing proves any thing, it will prove againſt the eſtabliſhment of any oath or teſt of fidelity whatever, if it can be proved that any have ever been wicked enough to break through ſuch an oath or teſt.—Whereas on the contrary, ſuch experience certainly is the beſt argument imaginable for confirming, and even adding ſtrength to ſuch teſt.—And the diſſimulation of ſuch perſons, is what makes it neceſſary to contrive all teſts ſo ſtrict, as may ſometimes exclude alſo better men; leſt theſe get in at a door opened for their betters.—Beſides, I can ſee no reaſon why we ſhould deſpiſe the beſt ſecurity we can get, becauſe it is not altogether ſo good as we could wiſh.—

Our author will pleaſe to keep in mind the proof he brings in this 110th and 111th pages, that an alteration was made in queen *Elizabeth*'s time, from king *Edward*'s articles, by expunging a paſſage againſt the real preſence; and that this was done with a deſign of uniting as many as poſſible into the communion of the church.—Becauſe this I look on as a ſufficient anſwer to all that is ſaid in the Confeſſional, to ſhow that the compilers intended to avoid *all* diverſity, and require *one uniform aſſent*.—We cannot but obſerve likewiſe, that if the allegation, in note *a*, page 111, be true, viz. "*that this mutilation was one of the* "*things which drove the ancient puritans out of the*

" *church*;" it ſhould ſeem to follow that too great a comprehenſion has as ill effects as too great a narrowneſs; and that laying aſide confeſſions entirely, could not but give grievous offence to multitudes. I am, ſir, &c.—

LETTER XI.

THE contents of the fifth chapter, I apprehend ſir, are in general ſufficiently anſwered already, by what has been ſaid of the lawfulneſs of ſubſcribing in a literal and grammatical ſenſe; at leaſt ſo far as to make it unneceſſary to enter into a long examination of this chapter; only a particular or two one cannot paſs by.—Our author argues, page 152.—That the compilers cannot be ſuppoſed to have deſigned to give room for latitude in ſubſcription; becauſe, " *they were, out of all doubt, all of one mind.*"—Now in the firſt place, if this were true, it would only ſhow that Dr. Nicholl's argument taken from the different ſentiments of the compilers, was not valid; but yet the thing he argued for might be true, for it might ſtill happen that men of the ſame mind might purpoſely uſe ſuch expreſſions as would admit of different literal or grammatical ſenſes.—In the next place, where is our author's authority, to declare that Cranmer, and at moſt one or two more, were the compilers, and theſe all of amind?—Eſpecially when he had ſaid, p. 134.—" *It might be another way*, [namely, that the articles were given out to ſeveral biſhops and divines to give their opinion of them] *and under this uncertainty, who can pretend to ſay with what temper*

temper they were compoſed, or by what views and conſiderations the compoſers were influenced?" — Is not this enough to put one upon aſking for our author's authority to pronounce ſo peremptorily, who were the compilers, and alſo concerning their unanimity? Eſpecially when he ſo plainly thought, in p. 134, that one could not with certainty know their ſentiments?—But further, by *compilers* in this queſtion, certainly muſt be meant ſomething more than can agree with Cranmer and one or two friends; becauſe we are here enquiring concerning our obligation to underſtand the articles in the *compiler's* ſenſe; or at leaſt concerning the authentic ſenſe of the compilers, and conſequently the word muſt include all who had any hand in authenticating the articles; i. e. all whoſe concurruence was concerned in giving authority to the articles, when they were firſt put forth as a work of authority.—And certainly their authority depended entirely on thoſe whoſe conſent to, or agreement in them, are publicly ſpecified, not on thoſe who compoſed them.—Of which this may be ſufficient proof, that if the real compoſers were never publicly known, or, being known, appeared to be men in inferior ſtations, yet this would no ways weaken their authority, after they had been peruſed and approved by thoſe in authority, and in a regular manner. Juſt as an act of parliament is never the worſe for having been drawn up at firſt by a private hand, if it has received the aſſent of each part of the legiſlature.—From hence it appears, that when we ſpeak of the ſenſe of the *compilers*, we ought to take in that of the council, the king, and even the convocation; and then I am pretty ſure our author will no longer aſſert, that "*they were*

were not of different opinions."—Again, our author will pleaſe to conſider the compilers, whoſe ſenſe we can at preſent at all be intereſted in, are not the compilers of king Edward's, but of queen Elizabeth's articles; and Cranmer at leaſt could be none of thoſe, whatever any of his particular friends might be. To conclude, we muſt refer our author, as we a little above propoſed doing, to his 110th and 111th pages, and our obſervations thereon.

Page 169.—Our author ſays, "*If the wording of any propoſition admit of two or more doctrines or ſenſes, and thoſe doctrines may be literally and grammatically contrary to each other; how could they both or all be defended as moſt agreeable to the divine word?*"—To this we may anſwer by another queſtion; viz. How can *two* or *more different propoſitions*, containing doctrines literally and grammatically contrary to each other, be both or all defended, as moſt agreeable to the divine word?—For the anſwer to one queſtion will, I apprehend, do for the other.—And is only this; two contrary doctrines cannot conſiſtently be attempted to be defended by the ſame perſon or perſons; but may by two different perſons, or different bodies of men, if to the beſt of their judgement, each think the doctrine they maintain really ſcriptural; and this juſt as well when they expreſs their different doctrines by the ſame form of words as when they uſe different forms.—p. 171.—"*Admit this ſubſcription to paſs, and you render the act of none effect.*"—Says our author.—Not ſo think I.—For the two ſubſcribers opinions may be ſuch as the articles are contrived to admit; viz. both literal and grammatical ſenſes of the ſame form; and yet the teſt may be

be good as to ſuch diverſities as were intended to be excluded, viz. opinions that cannot be reconciled to a literal and gramatical ſenſe of the articles.—The word *abſolute*, mentioned in the note, p. 170. to have been uſed by Lord Chief Juſtice Wray, is oppoſed to *conditional*; and plainly means ſubſcribing and aſſenting as the act requires; without the additional words made uſe of by Smith; and there is not the leaſt appearance that his lordſhip intended by theſe words, to diſtinguiſh between ſubſcription in *one uniform ſenſe*; and ſubſcription with *latitude*, where the form of words is not altered; and yet the whole force of the argumentation in the note depends upon the ſuppoſition that he uſed the words in this latter ſenſe.—The argument therefore entirely fails.

Page 194.—"*Would be utterly impertinent.*"—I am very far from ſeeing any impertinence at all in this caſe, therefore muſt think the anſwer very pertinent until otherwiſe convinced.—The next paragraph, (in our author's comment on the ſaid anſwer) contains an argument that has been inſiſted upon and conſidered before; and therefore we ſhall only aſk, if it is poſſible for a man to hold any doctrines ſo pernicious as to make it lawful to exclude him from the miniſtry?—If it is, then this argument proves too much, and conſequently proves nothing, for ſuch an one might plead the danger of ſtarving, as well as any in behalf of whom our author would apply the argument.—And who can ſay that either of theſe may not in his own opinion, be as honeſt, pious, and learned as the other?—And perhaps in the opinion of thoſe who exclude them too?—At leaſt each muſt appear to theſe in the ſame light,

light, as to true learning and knowledge;—and where theſe are wanting, honeſty and piety, excellent as they are in themſelves, will be but indifferent qualifications for teachers.

In page 195.—We have a ſad complaint of the deplorable ſituation of a man, who ſhould happen to ſay, that he could not in conſcience ſign the thirty-nine articles.—Here we muſt firſt obſerve, that, from the very ſtate of the caſe, no harm could happen to him unleſs ſome faithleſs friend ſhould turn informer; which therefore he muſt by a little human prudence, endeavour to avoid. —But ſhould this matter be known; I believe our author will not find it eaſy to ſhow an inſtance of any perſon in late days, whom any eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors have attempted to uſe ſo ſeverely, merely for ſaying, that he could not conſcientiouſly ſubſcribe, or any thing like it.—Nay, had ſuch an attempt been made, I believe our author would not ſcruple to plead in the culprit's behalf, ſome ſmall deficiencies in point of legality, in thoſe proceedings, before it could come to the puniſhment here deſcribed.—As for inſtance, probably he might aſk, what ſtatute declares a man excommunicate for this offence; and how a writ de excom. cap. can lye againſt any but one legally excommunicated?—Pleaſe to turn over the leaf, and there you will find we are "*to bleſs God for the lenity of the civil magiſtrate.*" So then it ſeems all the foregoing deſcription of diſtreſs was only to excite compaſſion, and the diſſenter is in no real danger of *bodily harm.*

Page 197.—"*A man of principle, ſays our author, will never be driven to make uſe of quirks and ſubtilties, till he finds himſelf bound to ſome unreaſonable and unrighteous conditions.*"—Who is to be the

the judge of the unreaſonableneſs and unrighteouſneſs of the conditions? If the man himſelf; will not thoſe, who find themſelves uneaſy under any reſtraint, call it unreaſonable and unrighteous; and conſequently may not every man thus juſtify his quirks and ſubtilties, be they ever ſo notorious or flagitious?—If thoſe who require the conditions are to judge; they can never allow them to deſerve theſe epithets, without implying that they approve and diſapprove the ſame thing at the ſame time; for as they require theſe conditions, they muſt be ſuppoſed to approve them; and if they acknowledge them to be unreaſonable and unrighteous, they muſt diſapprove them.—But I can hardly ſee how any man can be called a man of principle, who is by any thing driven to what he himſelf eſteems weak and unjuſtifiable excuſes; which I ſuppoſe muſt be the meaning of *quirks* and *ſubtilties*. The *man of no principle*, conducts himſelf as a man of integrity, when no temptation draws him aſide; bnt the *man of principle* can never be drawn aſide even by temptation.

" *And they, ſays our author, who deſire quirks and ſubtilties ſhould not be made uſe of, ſhould be careful not to lay ſnares or ſtumbling-blocks in the way of honeſt men, that they may be under no temptation to prevaricate.*—I really cannot ſee any difference between this argument and the following, viz. " *they who deſire perjury ſhould not be practiſed, ought not to enjoin the uſe of oaths;*" or, as 'tis far better expreſſed in the noted couplet,

" *'Tis he who makes the oath that breaks it;*
Not he who for convenience takes it."

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Where *the convenience* is what I think our author means by *temptation*.—Thoſe who approve one argument, will probably like the other.

If I underſtand the ſenſe of the next paragraph, it is this; viz. that if a man is good and conſcientious in practice, his *erroneous principles* in religion [in our author's words, *miſtaken notions*] do not render him unfit to be a public teacher; nay, that 'tis poſſible he may be a more edifying teacher, than thoſe, who hold right opinions; if *orthodoxy* means holding right opinions.—And I really am ſurpriſed that a writer of our author's abilities could entertain ſuch a thought.—But if this can be made out, I think one may readily acknowledge, as to one of its ends, the inutility of ſubſcription; for what ſignifies enquiring into a man's opinions, if wrong ones are no juſt exception againſt him as a teacher?—Nay, if the reaſoning of this paragraph is juſt, what need of teaching at all?—What need of quitting the church of Rome, on account of her corruptions?—And yet on the other hand, if the aſſertions of this paragraph are not true: I think the neceſſity of ſubſcription undeniable.

Page 198.—"*Let ſuch an one alone to follow his conſcience, and he will be ſincere, faithful, and diligent, in diſpenſing the word of God, according to his beſt information.*"—If this be a juſt reaſon to admit ſuch an one into the miniſtry; it certainly would prove that a papiſt, nay a Mahometan, ought not to be rejected as a teacher in a proteſtant church; unleſs none ſuch can be good and conſcientious in practice; and if that is not proving too much, I know not what is. I ſay nothing to the latter end and concluſion of this chapter, as conſiſting of aſſertion, declamation,

and ſarcaſm, rather than argument.—If our author can think the wit of this part compenſates for the manner in which he has choſe to treat what one would think a ſerious ſubject, I leave him to his own reflexions and thoſe of his readers, And am, Sir, &c.

LETTER XII.

CHAP. VI.—This chapter, Sir, I omit any regular examination of, as having already ſpoke my opinion of the ſentiments here examined.—Only we may make remarks on two or three paſſages as they occur.—Particularly p. 209.—Our author acknowledges, that our church lays no neceſſity on any man to ſubſcribe, otherwiſe than by denying him the emoluments of the miniſtry; and therefore if this be not a ſufficient objection to our eſtabliſhment, I ſhould think the matter entirely given up.—And that this is not a ſufficient objection, has, we hope, been ſufficiently ſhown.—But if our author thinks this has not already ſufficiently appeared, I beg leave to aſk him two or three queſtions.—Ought any one to take on him the office of a miniſter, without being duly authorized, in ſome viſible manner?—Ought any to authorize a teacher, or miniſter, without enquiring into his religious ſentiments?—Can any one, or any body of men authorize a teacher whoſe opinions are enquired into, and appear to him, or them erroneous in important points, without wilfully authorizing the propagation of error and corruption in religion?—If it be ſaid, there needs no enquiry, except concern-

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ing the candidate's abilities in the interpretation of ſcripture.—I anſwer, enquiry in this particular muſt be made by examining the candidate in difficult places; and the examiner will certainly judge of his abilities, by his conformity to his own ſentiments, concerning thoſe paſſages; indeed how can he judge otherwiſe?—And is not this examining into the candidate's opinions, on particular points? which differs nothing from our preſent ſubſcription; except that in one caſe, the criterian by which he is tried, is a publicly eſtabliſhed form; (which the candidate may examine and compare with ſcripture and his own notions beforehand, and ſo find whether he can come up to it or not;) in the other, it is the private opinion of the examiner or examiners.—

Page 211.— "*Proteſtant churches, (ſays our* "*author) ought not to employ human powers to* "*eſtabliſh religion, upon civil and political princi-* "*ples, nor ought conſcientious chriſtians to receive* "*their religion ſo eſtabliſhed.*"—I am not very clear what our author means, by "*eſtabliſhing* "*religion upon civil and political principles*;"—if he means that requeſting or accepting the aſſiſtance of the civil power, in making ſuch laws as appear neceſſary to ſecure the members of a proteſtant church, in the profeſſion of their religion, and to prevent the corruption of what they are fully perſuaded is true and genuine chriſtianity;—if he means, I ſay, that this is *employing human powers to eſtabliſh religion on civil and political principles*; I muſt beg leave to declare that I think this is certainly acting upon religious principles.—If he means that it is unlawful to ſollicit the protection and favour of the civil power; and beyond the province of the magiſtrate to grant

grant it; I muſt ſay that I apprehend it is out of our preſent queſtion to enter in that enquiry; the queſtion of the Confeſſional being, as I apprehend, concerning the right of eſtabliſhing confeſſions in churches; not concerning the right of eſtabliſhing a religion, or the religious principles of a church in a ſtate.—Only this I muſt ſay, that till I am convinced of error in my preſent principles; or ſee it proved to be the duty of a proteſtant to quit his religion, the moment the civil magiſtrate takes it into his protection; till then, I ſay, I ſhall think a conſcientious chriſtian may receive his religion ſo eſtabliſhed; and ſhall thankfully, I hope, acknowledge the bleſſing of being protected in my religion; and if any one think that to be a conſiſtent chriſtian, he ought to refuſe this patronage, I know of nothing that can hinder him from following his conſcience; as our author ſeems to allow here, that that is left to him; and conſequently, I think, (whatever has been ſaid to the contrary,) he allows alſo, that private judgment is ſtill uninfringed on.

Page 219.—Is employed moſtly in a long note, to prove *Roger*'s expoſition the only authoritative expoſition of the articles.—The argument to prove this, is that the chaplains of the arch-biſhop of *Canterbury* and *London*, and ſometimes of ſome other biſhops, were the appointed licencers of books at that time; and *Rogers* was chaplain to arch-biſhop *Bancroft*, and *probably* took *Bancroft*'s ſenſe, and ſo became the mouth of the church.—Now to make this argument good, two things muſt be ſuppoſed, viz. that no expoſition is ſo fully and regularly licenced as that of *Rogers*; and alſo that when a book is

regularly licenced, it muſt be ſuppoſed to contain the eſtabliſhed principles of the church of *England*; i. e. a book upon a religious ſubject.—Now I apprehend neither of theſe ſuppoſitions can be made good.—As to the firſt, *Welchman*'s was allowed by a vice-chancellor of *Oxford*, and and he was an appointed licencer; I ſuppoſe therefore, it is as regularly licenced as *Rogers*'s.—Ay, but the vice-chancellor was not the mouth of the church.—Very well; but *Burnet* was a biſhop, *Rogers* only a chaplain; *Burnet* certainly had the approbation of an archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, if not of two, and of ſeveral biſhops; was not biſhop *Burnet* then as much the mouth of the church, (whether his modeſty and diffidence allow him to claim it or not,) as *Rogers?*—Or does *Rogers* himſelf claim to be the mouth of the church, any more than *Burnet?*—And was not biſhop *Burnet*'s book, as regularly allowed?—But as to the ſecond ſuppoſition; a regular imprimatur cannot imply that a book contains a doctrine approved by the church of *England*; but only that it's contents are approved by the licencer.—For this reaſon; that as there were different licencers at the ſame time, the doctrine of the church might then be different at the ſame time; which is abſurd to ſuppoſe. But however, be that as it will, I do not ſee we have any thing to do, to enquire into the authenticity of any expoſition, or to prefer one to another; farther than they appear deſerving of our approbation, by their own merit; becauſe we ſubſcribe only to the articles themſelves; not to any expoſition of them.—As theſe expoſitions therefore are for private uſe; their legal authority (with real ſearchers after truth,) ſeems to me to be out of the queſtion.

Page 222.—I desire to know where our author's proof is, for this assertion, " *that the* " *church has declared, the articles were not design-* " *edly composed to allow of latitude.*"

Page 224.—Our author says, that " *a just* " *and proper reason, why no test should be required* " *of christian preachers is, because the subject of* " *preaching in a christian church is the gospel of* " *Christ.*"—Now this appears to me to be an excellent reason why a test should be required.—Because, without a test, how will you know who is a christian preacher?—And if you did know that, how, without a test, would you know that he would make the gospel of Christ the rule of his teaching? For how, without a test would you know what he esteemed gospel-doctrine? Nay, without a test, might not one as soon admit a Turk, a papist or a jew to be a teacher, as a protestant? In short, why is there to be any care in admitting teachers, if those, whose province it is to admit them, are not to use all the means in their power, which to them seem lawful and necessary, to secure the teaching of what appears to them the true gospel of Christ.—And if no care is to be taken, on this head, why are church governors commanded to " *lay hands suddenly on no man?*"

Page 226.—" *The legislature hath declared that* " *the articles shall be subscribed only in* one *sense* " *respectively*; *and that is in the* most obvious " *sense of each article.*"—This is a round and peremptory assertion indeed; but we must desire some proof of the truth thereof, before we assent to it; on the contrary, we think we have sufficient grounds to deny the assertion.—For we hope we have shown the design of *avoiding the diversities of opinions* does not exclude latitude

of ſubſcription.—And again the legiſlature has determined nothing about the ſenſe; it has only preſcribed the outward act; and when that is performed, the injunction of the legiſlature is obeyed.—Beſides we are told, page 179, and 180 poſitively, that "*the legiſlature even* cannot "*fix the ſenſe, without a new declaratory law.*"

Page 227.—"*It is the law, and the law only* "*that requireth ſubſcriptions,*" ſays our author.—Now it appears to me that here, and not "*in* "*the preceding paragraph,* (as he ſays,) *the mat-* "*ter is put in a wrong light.*"—The law cannot, I think be ſaid, ſtrictly ſpeaking (and ſince all here depends on the expreſſions, they ought to be exact,) to require ſubſcription, it is not capable of being injured by default hereof, nor is benefited by obedience.—But the expreſſion *the law requires*, may mean the authority enacting the law requires.—*The law* is not the agent, but only the *rule* and *authority* by which ſubſcription is required.—But be that as it will, neither the law, nor they who enacted it, require any thing but what is expreſſed in the law; and that is only the outward act of ſubſcribing and declaring, as therein mentioned, without one word limiting the ſenſe.—The ſubſcriber muſt determine for himſelf, as to his liberty or reſtraint, with regard to the ſenſe; the law *requires* no explications from him.

Page 227, 228.—It is a plain fallacy to ſay that "*what the church accepts and tolerates, ſhe* "*likewiſe eſpouſes and maintains.*"—And here lays the fallacy; that the word church is here taken in two different ſenſes; and the argument proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of its being only uſed in one.—If this diſtinction is not admitted, then

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we make the perſons *accepted* and *tolerated*, the ſame as the perſons *accepting* and *tolerating*.—Or to take it in another light; what the church *tolerates* only, ſhe plainly does *not eſpouſe* and *maintain*; by the very terms; as toleration implies ſome degree of diſapprobation; otherwiſe *tolerating* and *eſtabliſhing* would be the ſame.—Now the truth of the caſe is here; what opinions our church tolerates only, ſhe has not determined, (and conſequently does not eſpouſe and maintain,) as thinking it not inconſiſtent with peace and edification, to admit thoſe into her communion who differ in thoſe points.—And that this is no abſurdity, our author muſt allow; becauſe he is expreſsly pleading for this comprehenſion. —Though therefore we cannot go with him the length he would have us; yet let him not quarrel with us, for going as far as we do.

Page 229.—We are told that "*as ſoon as a* "*man ſubſcribes the articles, he ſigns away his right* "*to judge for himſelf.*"—This we really cannot ſee any reaſon to believe; we think a man may judge for himſelf as well after as before.—As to the danger of his being ſhown his miſtake, by the church, with the help of the ſtate; we may remember, that in page 196, Dr. *Jortin* was called in to tell us, that there is no real danger from that quarter.

Page 232.—The paragraph begun in this page, and ended in the next, is compoſed of conjectures, and concluſions from thoſe conjectures.—It is ſufficient to ſay, that from conjectural premiſſes, nothing more than conjectural concluſions can be drawn; therefore not convincing.—Page 234.—"*Whoever doubted but that, in matters of* "*religion, a man both uſefully may, and reaſonably*

" *ought to profeſs what he believed.*" This may be applied where we ſhow the lawfulneſs of one or more mens eſtabliſhing a confeſſion.

Page 235.—How our author can conceive; that any ſociety can take care, or be ſecured that the members ſhall " *lead quiet and peaceable lives,* " *in all godlineſs and honeſty,*" without having an eſtabliſhment of doctrinal terms, is to me as inconceivable, as the contrary could be to him; and though he has given us no reaſon for his opinion, I will venture to give this for mine; that I have always thought, and ſeldom or never ſeriouſly heard it contradicted; that the only way to ſecure the practice of good manners, is to eſtabliſh good principles, and that none can be expected " *to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in* " *all godlineſs and honeſty,*" but thoſe whoſe principles are godly and honeſt; and if ſo, I ſhould think it behoves the magiſtrate to ſee that a good doctrinal eſtabliſhment be fixed, as much as to look to matters of diſcipline; and is conſequently as much his province.—Otherwiſe I think he can never juſtly puniſh " *with many ſtripes,*" conſiſtently with our ſaviour's rule.—In ſhort to ſay that a civil magiſtrate ought to provide againſt corruption of manners, but not againſt corruption of doctrine, is, I think, neither more nor leſs than ſaying, that corruption of principle does not occaſion corruption of manners; or, at leaſt, that it is lawful to *puniſh wickedneſs,* but not to endeavour to *prevent it.*—As to the note on this page; we may obſerve, that when it is ſhown that the ſafety of civil ſociety can be ſecured, without the aids of religion, it may then be time enough to talk of eſtabliſhing a teſt of only a ſecular kind; but till then, if ſuch an

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one could be invented, (which I think impoſſible; becauſe you cannot give any meerly ſecular teſt a due ſanction, witneſs the inſtance alledged of the oath of allegiance; which implies a power in the magiſtrate to impoſe an oath, and that plainly acknowledges his right to interfere in religion, as it ſuppoſes his right to eſtabliſh the principle of the lawfulneſs of oaths, and conſequently of the belief of a providence; not to ſay what other principles are obviouſly connected with it; if, I ſay, a meerly ſecular teſt could be invented,) it would not anſwer the end of the chriſtian magiſtrate; becauſe ſo long as he thinks the care of an eſtabliſhed religion incumbent on him, he wants a teſt for the ſecurity of that alſo. —And that a wiſe magiſtrate muſt think that care incumbent on him always, may appear from what our author ſays, page 237.—viz. that the uſe of religion to ſociety is, *That men having in "their hearts the fear of God, and of his judgments, "may be reſtrained from evil, and encouraged to be "virtuous, in ſuch inſtances as are beyond the reach "of human laws.*"—Page 236.—"*But this being a matter rather of* perſonal *than* public *concern, muſt be left to the men themſelves.*"—That the *religious manners* of men are a meerly perſonal concern, I muſt beg to deny; as I am convinced all *mannners* are matter of public concern.—Which I think our author acknowledges, in the paſſage juſt quoted from the next page.—As to *religious ſentiments* our eſtabliſhment leaves every one to himſelf, and our author has confeſſed it, where he acknowledges every one is left unforced to aſſent, except the excluſion from emoluments be a force; which I cannot agree ought to be called ſo.—Even the appearance of real ſanctity, devotion, and chriſ-

tian virtue has its good effects in ſociety; and if it is only appearance, that muſt be owing to the man's own heart, not to an eſtabliſhment, unleſs it will be ſaid that all actions contrary to any law, are occaſioned by the enacting the law.

Page 241.—" *As ſure as God has revealed true* " *religion, ſo ſurely has he inhibited magiſtrates,* " *and all others from eſtabliſhing any thing* contrary " *to it, or* deviating *from it.*"—But there is another method of proceeding, not here mentioned, and that is, to eſtabliſh what is *conſiſtent with true religion*, or perhaps more properly ſpeaking, to eſtabliſh *the true religion* itſelf; this, I apprehend, is all the right the defenders of eſtabliſhments contend for; the queſtion therefore is whether the magiſtrate has a right to eſtabliſh this or no; nay, whether it is not a part of his duty, both to God and the ſociety ſo to do?—And this, I think, is allowed in page 237. above quoted.—Page 242.—If Pagan legiſlators acted up to the beſt light they had, will our author condemn them?—And if they did not, the compariſon will not hold between them and other legiſlators, who are by the defenders of eſtabliſhments ſuppoſed ſo to act.—As to the queſtion, " *What* " *were St.* Paul's *converts to do?*"—We anſwer; what all profeſſors of chriſtianity ought to do; viz. to conform peaceably to any eſtabliſhment their conſciences approve, and to refuſe conformity to what they cannot conſcientiouſly join in.—

We have paſſed by many particulars in this chapter, which we think eaſily to be refuted; partly for the ſake of brevity, and partly becauſe they ſeemed only to be the ſame in ſubſtance as what is to be found in many other parts of the

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confeſſional.—And perhaps we have already ſaid more than needs; as what we have ſaid, in general, concerning the lawfulneſs of ſubſcribing with latitude, might have excuſed us from ſaying any thing to our author's ſtrictures on thoſe, who are of a different opinion; and as our only defending the lawfulneſs and utility of eſtabliſhed confeſſions in general, and of that of the church of *England* in particular, not the private opinions of particular perſons, might have excuſed us from endeavouring to reconcile any ſeeming inconſiſtences in their writings; but we were willing not to leave room for any to ſuppoſe that we were deſirous to ſhuffle off the conſideration of any thing urged here, that ſeemed to affect the queſtion itſelf.—However, one may obſerve that there is one view of this matter which might go a great way, I think, towards removing many of the ſeeming inconſiſtences urged by our author, either between the different paſſages of the ſame writer; or between different writers; and that is by conſidering the articles, both as articles of peace, and as articles of belief; according as we conſider them with reſpect to the end aimed at by the ſociety, or with reſpect to the conſcience of the ſubſcribers.—The end aimed at by the ſociety is certainly to ſecure the peaceable and quiet profeſſion of what the ſociety thinks true religion, free from corruptions; and conſequently in this view the articles may be conſidered as articles of peace.—With reſpect to the conſcience of the ſubſcriber; they, I think, muſt be allowed to be articles of belief; becauſe I own I cannot ſee how a man can declare he aſſents to any thing he does not believe.—In the latter of theſe views, I cannot ſee how we can

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deny the ſubſcriber a latitude of ſenſe; becauſe as he only declares his aſſent to a certain form of words, and annexes no explication; I cannot ſee how we can accuſe him of hypocriſy, if he really aſſents to that form of words in the literal and grammatical ſenſe.—In the former view, I think the ſenſe of the articles muſt be one; though it may be a general one; not excluding ſuch difference of opinion, in particulars, as is not expreſsly prohibited, nor deſigned to be avoided by the articles.—But what ſeems to me moſt unreaſonable, and indeed uncharitable is, that the abettors of ſuch ſentiments, as the Confeſſional abounds with, claſs all ſubſcribers who differ from them, in two ranks: thoſe who ſubſcribe without underſtanding the articles, or troubling themſelves at all about the ſenſe of them; and thoſe who diſbelieve them, yet ſubſcribe from lucrative motives, and defend their ſubſcription, againſt their conſcience, meerly becauſe they will not take the ſhame of having done amiſs; tho' it is plain, in this accuſation, they cannot have any aſſurance it is well grounded; unleſs they could look into mens minds.—And yet ſome of theſe perſons themſelves both ſubſcribe and openly avow their prior diſbelief of ſome, at leaſt, of the articles; nay, and perhaps aſſert the unlawfulneſs of all of them;—and conſequently confeſs themſelves guilty of what they, from conjecture only, accuſe others of; nay and even own their conduct cannot be defended.—I am, Sir, &c.—

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

LET us now, Sir, proceed to chap. vii. page 246.— "*They were not ſatisfied*, (ſays our "author,) *concerning their agreement with the* "*word of God.*"—If we look back to page 10. of the pref. to this 2d edit. we ſhall find the reaſon given by Mr. *Peter Wentworth*, is only want of time to examine.—Which neither implies a belief nor a diſbelief of their agreement with the word of God; (though the ambiguity of the expreſſion *not ſatisfied*, ſeems calculated to inſinuate their diſbelief;) but only a cautious reſolution not to approve implicitly.—From whence we have reaſon to conclude, that others who have approved the articles, before they were publiſhed with their preſent authenticity, had acted in like manner; (at leaſt till ſomething can be ſhown to the contrary;) and conſequently that queen *Elizabeth* and her council; the convocation; and the parliament; and all others who have had any hand in giving a ſanction to our preſent eſtabliſhment, are as much to be conſidered as compilers, as thoſe who drew up the articles; as we have argued above.

Page. 282.—"*If occaſion is taken from creeds*, "*confeſſions, and articles of religion, of human de-*"*vice*;" viz. "*to raiſe ſuch diſputes, as whether* "*the guilt of ſin is to be charged on God or the ſin-*"*ner.*"—Either our author means by this ſuppoſition to ſpeak his own ſentiments, that this occaſion is taken, or not.—If the latter, to what end is the ſuppoſition made?—If the former,

I muſt beg leave to aſk, whether any difference of opinion, in theſe matters, exiſted among proteſtants, before our confeſſion and articles (for we have nothing at preſent to do with others;) were framed, or not?—If not, how happened the compilers to think it neceſſary to inſert articles on theſe points?—If contrary opinions did exiſt before, how can the eſtabliſhment of creeds, confeſſions, &c. be ſaid to have given occaſion thereto; when their eſtabliſhment was of poſterior date? That our author himſelf thinks confeſſions, &c. not the occaſion of all controverſies, particularly not of this concerning predeſtination; ſee note *w*, p. 288.—On the contrary, if confeſſions and articles are judiciouſly framed; (and all who approve any ought to be as well ſatisfied thereof, as their ſituation allows them to be;) muſt they not be of excellent uſe, to prevent the people's being miſled by ſuch diſputes as the above-mentioned, ſince, conſidered as abſtracts or epitomes of ſcripture doctrines, they help to preſerve us from the ſophiſtry of crafty men, who, from detached paſſages of ſcripture, might otherwiſe draw common chriſtians into notions inconſiſtent with the true principles of religion, and the general tenor of ſcripture? For though as our author ſays, "*The ſcriptures in truth give no juſt occaſion for any ſuch controverſy*;" yet, is it not notorious, that occaſion is taken from the ſcripture, as both ſides conſtantly appeal to it?—And therefore, if it be no juſt objection to allowing a free uſe of the ſcripture, that an occaſion is taken from thence, for maintaining ſuch controverſies, the ſame event ſurely can be no objection to the uſe of confeſſions; even if they had not been acquitted of this accuſation,

ſation, by being ſhown, as above, to be poſterior to the riſe of the controverſies.

P. 285.—"*The calviniſts certainly inferred the lawfulneſs of reſiſting wicked and unrighteous princes, from the theological principles of election and grace.*" —Now, not to queſtion this matter of fact at preſent, for the ſake of brevity; how does it prove that others cannot infer this from other principles?

P. 286.—"*I know ſome very worthy and eminent perſons, warm and faſt friends to the civil and religious rights of mankind, who are of opinion to this hour, that reſiſtance, even to wicked princes, cannot be juſtified upon religious principles, without having recourſe to the theological doctrines of the ancient puritans and independants.*"—Whoever theſe worthy and eminent perſons are, if they are ſuch as here deſcribed, they will doubtleſs allow to others, the liberty they exerciſe themſelves, viz. that of ſettling their opinions for themſelves. I do not underſtand this urging the authority of perſons unknown, and eſpecially when no reaſons for their opinions are aſſigned.

Ibid.—I cannot believe that our author either thinks indulgencies, or the popiſh notion of merit, juſtly founded on Rom. iv. 4. or any other text in St. Paul's writings; or that he thinks the doctrine of the neceſſity of good works as a condition of eternal ſalvation, inconſiſtent with St. Paul's writings; and therefore, I go not about to anſwer him in ſuch a matter.

As to what follows in the next half dozen pages, concerning our approach too near popery; it is only what has conſtantly been objected to us by diſſenters, and as conſtantly denied by the friends of the eſtabliſhed church; and therefore

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I need not undertake to anſwer what has been ſo often and well anſwered.

P. 293.—Here our author attempts to prove, that the articles are not ſuſceptible of an arminian ſenſe.—And in the courſe of this argument, he brings an opinion of Dr. Waterland's, that latitude is allowable; becauſe the compilers intended a latitude: another of Dr. Sykes's, that latitude is allowable; becauſe, though the intention of the compilers might not allow it, yet the words do: and alſo an aſſertion of the laſt named doctor's, that even the legiſlature, without a new declaratory law, cannot fix the ſenſe in which alone ſubſcription is required.—And from hence (viz. I ſuppoſe from this difference of arguments and opinions,) he argues, that an honeſt man cannot ſubſcribe with latitude.—Whereas, from the very ſame premiſes, I conclude any man may very honeſtly.—For theſe all agree in the main point, that a latitude is lawful, and only differ in the arguments on which they maintain this principle.—Therefore, (not to mention that it ſeems very odd to argue againſt the lawfulneſs of any thing from two or three opinions, which declare it lawful;) if the arguments brought to prove the firſt opinion appear to any one convincing, then he may certainly ſubſcribe with latitude; ſo likewiſe if the arguments to confirm the ſecond appear juſt; for in either caſe he follows what his conſcience tells him is right.—And if the arguments brought to eſtabliſh the aſſertion concerning the power of the legiſlature ſeem good, then 'tis certainly plain, that he may ſubſcribe in the literal and grammatical ſenſe; becauſe it is certain all that the legiſlature interferes in is, the outward act; and his putting a particular ſenſe on

on the words is a private tranſaction in his own mind; nor can I think any honeſt man needs heſitate; as if he were equivocating, or impoſing on the public; becauſe, if he intends to teach ſuch doctrines as he believes the church repreſentative expects him to teach; and if he is miſtaken in what he ſuppoſes is expected from him, is willing to ſubmit to lawful cenſures; he cannot juſtly, I think, be accuſed of deceiving the ſociety.

P. 296.—Our author ſays, "*How could honeſt men ever bring themſelves to think they were at liberty to put a ſenſe upon a writing, which the authors of that writing never intended?*"—How are we certain that a ſenſe different from the compilers is put upon the articles, by thoſe who plead for the literal and grammatical ſenſe? For Dr. Sykes, in the paſſage quoted, allows that they deſignedly expreſſed themſelves with moderation, which I think amounts to the ſame as admiting latitude by deſign.

What follows concerning biſhop Sanderſon's caſuiſtry, is not my buſineſs here to conſider; as I am not undertaking to reconcile biſhop Sanderſon's writings; or any particular perſon's; nor endeavouring to recommend ſubſcription to any who is not perfectly ſatisfied of the truth of what he ſubſcribes to; and the lawfulneſs of ſuch ſubſcription in every reſpect.

P. 313.—"*The queſtion is, whether the church of England does not by her authority* de facto, *ſuperſede the allegiance ſhe expreſſes to the ſcriptures* de jure, *by requiring ſubſcriptions to her own interpretations?*" This is the queſtion indeed; and we do not heſitate to anſwer in the negative.—For our church puts no force upon any man. (The old plea of

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excluding from emoluments we have frequently anſwered above.) She puts the ſcriptures into his hands; ſhe offers her articles for his aſſent; and if he thinks them not agreeable to ſcripture he is at liberty to refuſe his aſſent.—So that what is called requiring ſubſcription, is in effect no more than enquiring into his opinions.—And if this be inconſiſtent with private judgment, I cannot ſee how any perſon can confer with another, on religious ſubjects, without infringing on his neighbour's liberty.—Our author very often aſſerts, that requiring ſubſcriptions is inconſiſtent with the rights of private judgment, but I cannot find any paſſage where he has proved or explained how or why it is ſo.—Indeed, if we were but to ſubſtitute one equivalent expreſſion for another, by ſaying, That the church of England claims a right of excluding thoſe ſhe eſteems improper perſons from the miniſtry; inſtead of ſaying ſhe requires ſubſcriptions; I think the groundleſſneſs of our author's aſſertion would immediately appear.

We have purpoſely omitted the conſideration, whether our author's origin of latitude in ſubſcription be juſt or not, becauſe we have nothing to do with the origin.—If the thing itſelf be lawful and good, it matters not much whence it ſprung; eſpecially as he allows that thoſe who have eſpouſed the practice, differ from thoſe he attributes it to, in other reſpects.—Only it may be remembered, we have argued for latitude above, from the intentions of the compilers in Queen Elizabeth's days; which is long before Laud's time.

I am, Sir, &c.

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LETTER XIV.

WE come now, Sir, as we above propoſed, to conſider an expedient or two offered by our author, to put this matter of ſubſcription upon a better footing.—When our author has ſo frequently and poſitively aſſerted, That no proteſtant church has any right to require ſubſcription to any human inſtitution: I cannot but wonder at his attempting to amend, what he thinks altogether and abſolutely unlawful.—And indeed this part of the work ſeems to fit its place ſo ill, that I cannot but look upon it as a qualifying concluſion, ſubſtituted inſtead of the natural one; which, upon a review, perhaps, might appear rather too bold a propoſal.

But perhaps I may be told, the ſubſcription he admits, is not to an human inſtitution.—Let us hear then what theſe expedients are, and then we may better judge what name to give them; what utility to expect from them; and whether they are more defenſible than our preſent ſyſtem.—One thing propoſed by our author, and which has already been mentioned, is found p. 17, of pref. to 2d edit. and Confeſſional, p. 388, and is, "*That candidates for the miniſtry, ſhall declare their aſſent to the ſcriptures, and promiſe to make them the rule of their teaching.*"—Another expedient is, "*That the church ſhall be further ſecured of the candidates' fitneſs, by their anſwering ſome queſtions in the ordination office.*"—And "*Theſe ſecurities, he thinks, the church or ſociety, which the miniſters are connected with, may reaſonably require.*"

Now theſe declarations and engagements certainly differ in nothing from the preſent ſubſcriptions, except that the aſſent is in one caſe teſtified by the mouth only, and in the other by the hand alſo; and our author acknowledges, in chap. 8, that he who ſcruples not making theſe declarations and promiſes, cannot ſcruple ſubſcribing them; we may then I ſuppoſe, without offence, call theſe ſubſcriptions.—And that they are ſubſcriptions to human forms, or confeſſions in unſcriptural words, will not I ſuppoſe be denied.

Let us conſider now, whether theſe expedients will anſwer the ends aimed at by ſubſcription; and whether they are more defenſible conditions of admiſſion to the miniſtry, than ſubſcription to larger forms? As to the utility of theſe expedients, our author ſays, "*That theſe declarations and promiſes may be made by diſſenters; and therefore are ſufficiently comprehenſive.*"—At preſent we ſhall ſuppoſe them ſufficiently comprehenſive; (though we expect to ſhow by and bye, that they are not enough ſo to anſwer the ends heretofore pleaded for by our author;) but we muſt alſo add, that we think them far too comprehenſive to anſwer the ends of ſubſcription.—For I do not ſee how theſe expedients would exclude one papiſt from our miniſtry; ſince they refer to ſcripture ultimately for all their tenets; as they pretend to the authority of ſcripture for the grand doctrine of infallibility, church power, &c. and conſequently ultimately refer to the ſame authority, for all their other doctrines built upon thoſe principles.—That they have no juſt grounds to urge the authority of ſcripture, for theſe uſurpations, I ſhall moſt readily acknowledge.—But that

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is not the queſtion now.—All that we have occaſion to ſhow is, that as they pretend to ſcripture authority, they may very well make this declaration of aſſenting to, and making ſcripture the rule of their teaching.—Nor do I ſee why they ſhould heſitate to anſwer the queſtions in the ordination office, accommodated to their own notions of the duty of a miniſter:—and this liberty of accommodation our author cannot deny to any; becauſe he ſuppoſes it will ſuit people of various opinions.—Thus I think it plainly appears, that our author's ſcheme would not exclude one papiſt; which certainly is one of the main views in a proteſtant church.—Neither would this be a teſt againſt almoſt any of the numerous ſectaries; ſince they plead ſcripture authority alſo, and endeavour to ſhow that their doctrines are conſiſtent therewith; and conſequently it could exclude none of thoſe from the miniſtry.—Hence then we ſee it would not produce that uniformity that is neceſſary to edification.—For if we look back to what has been ſaid to ſhow the utility of confeſſions, we ſhall ſee, that all the edification to be hoped for from public worſhip (where we are required to meet "*with one accord*;") and a great part of the edification ariſing from private converſation, muſt be loſt in ſuch an heterogeneous company as this project would take in.—Indeed public worſhip muſt entirely be laid aſide, I think; becauſe as the form of worſhip muſt refer to the principles held by the worſhippers; no ſettled form could be agreed on, where the worſhippers differ as to the object of worſhip, the expectation of retribution, and even the obligations incumbent on them; and yet, who ſees not that theſe and numerous other

differences, muſt ſubſiſt in a ſociety, who ſhould have no other terms of admiſſion, even into the miniſtry, than the propoſed form!—Nor would it mend the matter, if the form of worſhip were extempore, as we have obſerved above.—For, beſides all the objections which we, of the church of England, hold to lay againſt ſuch forms, even where the worſhippers are unanimous; beſides theſe, I ſay, there lays this further objection, That the miniſter muſt regulate his effuſions, by his own private principles, and conſequently thoſe who differ from him, in any of the above-mentioned, or any other important particulars, could never join with him, or worſhip "*with one accord.*"—Again, we have obſerved above, That confeſſions are uſeful as abſtracts or epitomes of ſcripture; both to give conſiſtent notions of religion, to ſuch as want abilities or opportunities to ſettle their own notions, by an attentive ſtudy of the ſcriptures; and alſo for thoſe to recur to, who have taken up their notions on due grounds, that they may not be "*toſſed about by every wind of doctrine*," nor miſled by ſome plauſible tenet, built upon detached paſſages of ſcripture.—Theſe uſes it is evident would not be anſwered by our author's expedients.—Again, this ſcheme, as it does not ſpecify our objections to popery, would not vindicate our ſeparation to the impartial; and this is another end of confeſſions.—Again, this would not ſerve as a ſufficient teſt of the principles of thoſe who are candidates for the miniſtry; becauſe, men of ſo many different and contrary opinions might aſſent to this form, that nothing but confuſion would ariſe in their teaching; and probably ſuch ſcandals be occaſioned, that chriſtianity itſelf might at laſt be rejected by the

the common people; nay, and by all who could not diveſt it of the corruptions, which muſt ſpeedily over-run it.—For if they were one day to hear a Trinitarian, another an Arian, another a Socinian, another a Soul-ſleeper, another a maintainer of the intermediate ſtate, another an aſſertor of the eternity of future puniſhments, another a denier thereof, another a maintainer of the neceſſity of good works, another an Antinomian, another an abſolute Predeſtinarian, another a defender of the doctrine of conditional decrees, &c. where would, where could the common hearer fix; or would he not be ſo wearied out with continual oppoſitions of this ſort, as abſolutely to fall into ſcepticiſm?—If I am anſwered that every one muſt judge for himſelf; I agree to it; as far as he is able.—But what muſt they do, whoſe want of both time and abilities oblige them to depend greatly on others?—If the principles and practices of this claſs of mankind are not to be regulated greatly by their teachers, how are they to be regulated?—Now, if a man of this claſs has a regular ſet of principles taught him in his youth, he has ſome land-marks to ſteer by; and if he never meets with any reaſon to doubt of the juſtneſs of his principles, he may go on comfortably in the practice of his duty, to the beſt of his judgment, and will no doubt by ſo doing, be acceptable to God.—If, on the contrary, he has any doubts ariſe, he may conſult thoſe he judges able to adviſe him, and according as he is confirmed in his opinion or convinced of error, will either remain where he is, or join himſelf with thoſe whoſe principles he thinks better; and ſo may ſtill have ſettled notions, and go on with peace of mind and edification.—Whereas, with-

out this, I think ſuch an one muſt always be diſobeying the apoſtolic command, "*not to be toſſed about with every wind of doctrine.*"—Further ſtill, confeſſions are, by our author himſelf, allowed not only to be uſeful, but neceſſary, to teſtify to the world, that we do not hold ſuch opinions as they do, whom our author calls, "*Scandals to religion, and nuiſances to ſociety.*"—This end cannot be anſwered by our author's expedients; and conſequently, I think, we need not bring any further arguments to ſhow, that the propoſed plan will not anſwer the ends of ſubſcription.

Let us next conſider, whether ſuch a ſubſcription as this propoſed by our author, be not as liable as a larger form, to the objections he urges againſt a larger form?—All that has been urged againſt the preſent form, I think amounts to no more than this, That it is hard upon thoſe, who think as the Confeſſionaliſt does, to be obliged either to ſubſcribe to what they are not convinced is true, or to forfeit the emoluments of the miniſtry.—And may not the ſame objections be urged, with equal force, againſt this very ſcheme? May not the quaker, or any other enthuſiaſt, who thinks he has *inſpiration*, *immediate revelation*, or *the light within*, as lawfully complain of being tied up to take ſcripture for the rule of teaching, or to forfeit emoluments, as a Confeſſionaliſt can now complain?—Or may not any perſon, who has not had time and opportunity to examine carefully what is urged, or may be urged, for the authenticity of the ſcriptures; or who has not yet ſo carefully examined the full import and obligation of the promiſes in the ordination office, as to know whether he can comply with them all or not; (which I fancy poſſible to happen

pen in the 23d or 24th year of his life;) may not ſuch as well complain of being obliged to give his aſſent to ſcripture, and make it the rule of his teaching, and to make theſe promiſes, as Confeſſionaliſts can now complain?—Nay, how will our author prove the authenticity of ſcripture, and conſequently that it is more than of human authority; ſince he has, p. 327, denied the primitive chriſtian writers to be "*even credible witneſſes of matter of fact?*"—Further ſtill, if it be true as our author ſays, p. 211. — That neither eccleſiaſtical nor civil power have a right to eſtabliſh ſuch a form of ſubſcription, as now in uſe in the church of England; may not any one aſk, how they came by the right of demanding this aſſent to ſcripture, and anſwers to theſe queſtions in the ordination office?—The difference ſeems only to lay in the particulars of the ſubſcription; which though it may make great difference as to the number of ſubſcribers; (ſince many I acknowlege might aſſent to our author's plan, who would not ſubſcribe our articles;) yet makes none at all, as to the authority enjoining ſubſcription; for if any perſon or perſons have a right to require ſubſcription to any one article, which they think is a reaſonable ſecurity to the ſociety; they muſt have an equal right to require ſubſcription to as many as they think reaſonable for the ſame end; for certainly it muſt be thoſe who have a right to require ſubſcription, that muſt fix the form of ſubſcription; not the ſubſcribers.—Again, we may aſk, whether this aſſent to ſcripture is to be eſteemed an aſſent to a certain canon, a certain copy, the original, or ſome particular tranſlation, and whether to ſome particular ſenſe?—If theſe queries are anſwered in the affirmative; we may

next aſk, who has authority to fix all theſe?—If in the negative; we then aſk, why latitude in ſubſcription may not as well be allowed under the preſent eſtabliſhment, as in our author's new modelled one?—Eſpecially, when we may aſk alſo, with regard to the queſtions in the ordination office, whether they are taken in a fixed ſenſe? If ſo; who is to fix that? If not; why may not equal latitude be admitted on the preſent plan?—For our author has ſhewn one ſentence, at leaſt, in theſe queſtions, to be ambiguous, in note *d*, p. 382.—In ſhort, therefore, what can be ſaid in favour of our author's expedients, which cannot be ſaid in favour of our preſent eſtabliſhment?—For as to it's greater comprehenſion, we have ſhown we look upon that to be a capital objection to it?—Beſides, if we ſhould adopt the Confeſſionaliſt's ſcheme, we cannot be ſecure that we ſhould ſatisfy him; much leſs all diſſenters.—For when we have been told, in the text, that "*theſe ſecurities are very reaſonable*;" and that the preſent diſſenters may aſſent to them; a note at the bottom of page 382, retracts this again, and ſays, "*Perhaps one of the promiſes made in the ordination office, ought to be omitted, viz. the engagements to oppoſe, and endeavour to baniſh and root out error.*"—And the reaſon aſſigned is, "*becauſe by that promiſe a miniſter may engage to oppoſe, and endeavour to root out opinions held by ſome honeſt man.*"—Now, in my opinion, if this promiſe is left out; (as intending to leave the miniſter at liberty, whether or no he will perform what that promiſe would engage him to;) it will be quite unneceſſary for him to make any of thoſe promiſes at all; or indeed to take upon him the office of a teacher.—For if teachers muſt

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not oppoſe and endeavour to root out errors, methinks we might do without them.—Nay further ſtill, if the reaſon aſſigned be good, how came we to oppoſe any of the errors of popery; unleſs we will ſay, that there is not among all the papiſts one honeſt man?

But to ſet this matter, if poſſible, in a ſtill clearer light, let us aſk, whether our author thinks it neceſſary to make any enquiry concerning the abilities of candidates for the miniſtry? If not, then every one muſt be admitted who offers; and then, I fancy, we ſhould hear leſs complaint of excluſion from emoluments; ſince, in that caſe, the number of claimants would make a ſingle ſhare not worth attention.—But in the mean time, what would become of our religion?—But I cannot believe our author will maintain ſuch a poſition. And all the anſwer that, as I hear, is generally given to this queſtion is, "*That if a man is qualified to read the ſcriptures in the original, and to tranſlate them, his abilities are ſufficient.*"—The validity of this anſwer has been enquired into in our remarks on the 6th chapter, and as it has there, I hope, been ſhewn to be inſufficient; I muſt conclude, That this plan of our author's would not be a ſufficient teſt for admiſſion to the miniſtry.

To conclude, either our author's arguments againſt confeſſions of faith in general are good or not.—If they are good; then his own expedients above conſidered, muſt, I think, evidently appear indefenſible; as being equally liable to the very ſame objections, which our author thinks lye againſt the preſent ſyſtem; nay, in truth, far more liable.—If the arguments are not good; (as we hope moſt of his readers will think they are not,)

not,) then there is no ſort of occaſion to exchange our preſent long-tried and long-approved form, for one, which we hope we have evidently proved, even untried, to be inſufficient for the purpoſes aimed at; nay, it would be very culpable ſo to do.—So that whether his arguments are good or bad, it ſeems his expedients fail; ſince in the firſt caſe they would be unlawful; and in the latter are unneceſſary, inſufficient, and not eligible, as we have a better form already.

But if the Confeſſionaliſts are attempting entirely to ſubvert the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment itſelf; (which I really and cooly muſt ſay, I apprehend is the tendency of the arguments in the Confeſſional; if I can underſtand them, and which I fancy the author himſelf will not deny; if they are attempting this, I ſay,) they certainly are attempting to open a wider door than the ſenſible and cautious diſſenters themſelves wiſh. For I cannot, upon the moſt candid repeated conſideration, ſee any difference between an abolition of all eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment; and ſuch a liberty of conſcience as the proclamations of a Charles or a James aimed at. — The papiſts might not immediately perhaps obtain the power they would have done in thoſe reigns; (God be thanked for better princes, and a better conſtitution;) but if the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment were to fall, muſt not the teſt go with it?—And when all parties had an equal freedom of profeſſion; and the road to profit, honour, and above all to power, lay equally open to all; it is eaſy to foreſee effects, from the cunning, cruel, and ſecret machinations of popery, that muſt make a true proteſtant tremble.—Therefore, though I ſincerely wiſh every proteſtant diſſenter all the liberty

liberty that is reaſonable, i. e. all that is conſiſtent with the ſafety of the church of England; yet, even for their own ſakes (and I believe many of them agree with me) I do not wiſh them an indulgence that would betray both them and us into the power of our common enemy, popery; and as I really am perſuaded that would undoubtedly be the conſequence of laying aſide the uſe of a confeſſion, and conſequently deſtroying the eſtabliſhment, I cannot but dread the thoughts of it. —— And, conſequently I ſay, deſtroying the eſtabliſhment.—For a religious eſtabliſhment without a confeſſion, I cannot, (as I believe I have ſaid above) even get an idea of, How can any inſtitution be formed without ſpecifying the particulars thereof?—Can any one conform to a religion, if the particulars thereof are not ſpecified?—And if they are ſpecified in ever ſo general terms, thoſe terms muſt be conſidered as a confeſſion.—I fancy it will not be ſaid, that "*Confeſſions may be allowed, but ſubſcription ought not to be required*;" becauſe the title of the Confeſſional is only concerning the right and utility of eſtabliſhing confeſſions; ſo that then the principal queſtion is given up, if confeſſions are allowed.—And if it be ſuppoſed that the eſtabliſhing a confeſſion, and requiring ſubſcription to it, are ſo connected as to make parts of the ſame queſtion; I am willing to ſuppoſe it ſo; but then the neceſſity of one being made out, I reckon the neceſſity of the other muſt follow.—And indeed, in our church in particular, the conſequence ſeems clear; becauſe, as the laity are no where called upon to ſubſcribe; if the clergy were not called upon ſo to do, we ſhould have a confeſſion, without any declared

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confeſſors; which I think is not very intelligible. Beſides, how could the confeſſion be ſaid to be eſtabliſhed, if none were obliged to acknowledge it?—As to the caſe at Geneva, we have above ſhown that the promiſe not to contradict the Conſenſus, is, to all intents and purpoſes as good a ſecurity as ſubſcription; but not at all a lighter burthen to the miniſter. — Nay, ſuppoſe our author were indulged with a freedom even from ſuch a promiſe; and ſuppoſing it were not abſurd to think of eſtabliſhing a confeſſion, without requiring any to acknowlege it; ſtill I think he would not be in much a better plight.—For either the church governors muſt have a right to correct, and even to ſilence teachers, who go contrary to the confeſſion, or not.—If not; why are there any governors?—And if there ought to be no church governors, where is the church? For a ſociety without laws and without governors, I think one may venture to call an Utopia.—If they have a right as above; then what matters it, to the miniſter, whether he be refuſed admiſſion into the miniſtry, or be turned out for non-conformity? Since the latter muſt ſoon happen to him, who diſapproves the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem; unleſs he diſſembles, and conceals his own principles from his hearers; which I am pretty ſure will not be defended by our author. As to the community indeed there is a difference; as it is always allowed to be better to *prevent* than *puniſh* miſchief.—So that upon the whole, I think, it looks ſomething very like a demonſtration, that without a religious eſtabliſhment no religious edification is to be expected; and that a religious eſtabliſhment is even inconceivable without both an eſtabliſhed confeſſion, and alſo a

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ſubſcription, or ſomething that is equivalent to it; whether conſidered as a ſecurity to the ſociety, or as an obligation on the miniſter.

And now we hope we might finiſh our remarks; but that we may not be thought blameable in neglecting the laſt chapter; we ſhall juſt ſubjoin a few remarks upon it.—At preſent, however, you will give me leave to conclude, aſſuring you, that

I am Sir, &c.

LETTER XV.

IF your patience, ſir, will permit, I will now make a few remarks on ſome paſſages of the laſt chapter.

Chap. VIII.—p. 317.—"*Such an one will acknowledge that a reformation is* devoutly *to be wiſhed.*"—Thoſe who acknowledge this, may anſwer for themſelves; whether they mean ſuch a reformation as our author aims at or no.—As to others, I believe there may be many of common honeſty, common ſenſe, and no ſmall degree of Chriſtian charity, who think that it behoves the friends of the church of England, to be very cautious of innovations; and who have been confirmed in this opinion greatly by the confeſſional and ſome ſuch late productions; which lead them to think they have ſufficient ground both to conclude that hardly any reformation would pleaſe ſome men; and alſo that by what is called reformation is really meant the demolition of the eſtabliſhment.

Page 319.—Is not the method to bring about a reformation, which is pointed out in this page, viz. "*by applying for authority to the civil powers*," rather inconſiſtent with the aſſertion, p. 211.—that "*proteſtant churches ought not to employ human powers to eſtabliſh religion*, &c?"

Page 325.—"*How come they* [*the common people*] *to be ſo weak, ignorant, and injuditious in religious matters?*"—I have no buſineſs to defend particular writers; eſpecially not detached paſſages; though probably, had one time to conſult the books quoted, one might from the connexion, ſay ſomething to ſet this gentleman [Mr. White] in a more favourable light than our author has ſhewn him in.—But the queſtion here aſked affects the whole body of the clergy, as our author anſwers it.—One cannot help therefore obſerving, that after two pages ſpent in denying Mr. White's aſſertion, one would not have expected to hear the clergy accuſed as the cauſe of what he aſſerts. Surely our author could not both think the aſſertion falſe; and alſo, that the clergy were the cauſe of the fact aſſerted.—I am unwilling to take ſuch handles; otherwiſe ſuch readineſs to load the clergy, might afford ſome cauſe of complaint.—However, if the queſtion muſt be anſwered, is there no other anſwer to be found, but what our author gives; viz. the negligence of the clergy?—Some people are candid enough to ſuppoſe, that miniſters cannot inſtruct thoſe who are unwilling to attend their diſcourſes; ſome aſſign as the cauſe of this unwillingneſs, the various ſelf-ſent itinerant preachers, whoſe firſt buſineſs is to villify the regular teachers, in order to make their own labours appear more neceſſary; ſome attri-

bute the appearance or encreaſe of theſe ſame irregular teachers, to the lenity of the preſent eſtabliſhment; ſome to the publication of ſuch books as villify both the eſtabliſhment and the clergy; and ſome argue from hence, that, if the eſtabliſhment were entirely demoliſhed, we could expect nothing but ſuch teachers, and ſuch hearers.—Whether ſuch allegations are a better anſwer to the queſtion than our author has given, muſt be left to the impartial to determine.

P. 339.—I cannot think the argument a juſt one, that is drawn from our Saviour's and St. Paul's conduct.—Becauſe the divine wiſdom of one, and the inſpiration of the other enabled them to know certainly what was expedient; whereas we, having nothing but human prudence, and the ſecret aſſiſtance of the holy ſpirit, to ſecure us from error, ought to proceed with caution, and be well aſſured that any alterations we preſume to make in religion, are both lawful and expedient.—In one caſe there was an *extraordinary* miſſion; in the other there is only an *ordinary* miniſtry.—And again, though our preſent times ſhould in ſome particulars ſeem not more unfit for alterations than the primitive times of the goſpel, yet, in other particulars, they may be more unfit; and what is more ſtill, they may want that remarkable fitneſs, which in our Saviour's and the apoſtle's times, more than counterbalanced the unfitneſs.—Further alſo the abſolute neceſſity of a new revelation, at that time, and the miraculous powers accompanying it, were beyond all diſpute, I think, circumſtances which render it impoſſible to draw a juſt parallel in this caſe.—For, (not to ſay that many worthy men may be of a different opinion from our

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author, as to the adviſeableneſs of an alteration in our ſyſtem; who therefore are no ways obliged to reſt the queſtion upon the proof of the unſeaſonableneſs of the project; not mention this, I ſay) our author will pleaſe to remember that we have above remarked, that even thoſe worthy men amongſt ourſelves, who have ſpoke moſt favourably of an alteration, are only to be underſtood to have mentioned ſuch a ſcheme, in charitable condeſcenſion to thoſe who complain; but are by no means to be underſtood to have thought that ſuch a thing was eſſentially neceſſary.—And he himſelf has acknowledged as much.—If therefore any of thoſe, whoſe province it is to act in promoting a reformation, think that there is any thing in the preſent times, that gives them juſt cauſe to apprehend, that ſhould they attempt an alteration, the cure might be worſe than the diſeaſe; then they are certainly right to make no ſuch attempt.—And that there are ſuch circumſtances in the preſent times, probably many worthy perſons may be perſuaded, notwithſtanding all that our author has ſaid.—We may alſo add, that our bleſſed Saviour and St. Paul, certainly knew they ſhould have ſucceſs; whereas, if we may judge from appearances, we have reaſon to apprehend, that the adopting our author's ſcheme, could at moſt, only ſtop the mouths of ſuch as happen to think exactly as he does; and ſo would only be ridding ourſelves of one ſet of diſſenters to fall under the diſpleaſure of others.—Nay, nor are we even certain of ſucceeding thus far, at leaſt for any time; as our author has given us a pretty clear hint, that if we grant what is now aſked of us, we may expect other demands; and has, in the inſtance of the

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promiſes in the ordination office, given us a proof that conceſſions may be retracted; or that what pleaſes at one time may not pleaſe at another.—Beſides our bleſſed Saviour himſelf did not condemn the eſtabliſhment itſelf, as unlawful; far from it; but his words and actions ſhowed that "*he came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil it*;"—He only came to take away the corruptions, and to ſuperſede what was then become obſolete.

Page 351.—I agree with our author that there are few (if any) truths or errors of the religious kind, that can be called *merely ſpeculative*.—But, for this very reaſon, I think very differently from our author, of ſuch a teacher as is above deſcribed in page 197.—And wonder how the principles here and there can be reconciled.

Page 353.—"*Yet our Lord imagined that the truths that could thus be recovered to mankind, would more than attone for theſe temporary inconveniences.*"—Our Lord not only imagined, but *certainly knew* this; but is that any reaſon why any now-a-days ſhould attempt alterations, when they neither *know* nor *imagine* that the *good* to be *hoped* will counterbalance the *evil* to be *feared?*—In this particular therefore, there is a material difference.

Page 356, 357.—I ſhall not detain you, ſir, with a defence of the clergy accuſed in theſe pages; for with thoſe prejudiced againſt them, a defence would probably be fruitleſs; with others, (in ſuch attacks) unneceſſary.—As to the argument contained in theſe pages, if I underſtand it, it can only be this; viz. that theſe ſeveral attacks of St. Athanaſius were productive of no diſturbance among the laity.—To which I think we need only anſwer, they were put a ſtop

to in time; and that very circumſtance ſhows that the laity apprehended what their tendency was.—Otherwiſe the higher powers would never have interfered in one caſe, nor backed out the proceedings in the others.

Page 359.—"*I am neither afraid nor aſhamed to call for a review.*"—This paſſage ſurely gives one room to think that the Confeſſional aims at ſomething more, and more dangerous to avow than a review in order for reformation; (and what can that be but an utter demolition of the eſtabliſhment?) otherwiſe one is at a loſs to reconcile that book's being anonymous, with this paſſage.—It would be digreſſing to enter into a diſpute concerning the inconſiſtency between the Athanaſian creed and liturgy; or concerning the merit of the appeal.—It may be ſufficient to ſay, that thoſe who do not think our author demonſtrates any ſuch inconſiſtency, are as right in acquieſcing in the preſent form, as he (if he thinks he ſees ſuch inconſiſtency) in diſſenting; and thoſe who are not convinced by the appeal, have juſt as good right to hold it cheap, as he to hold writings of a different ſtamp ſo.

Page 360.—"*No Engliſhman of any name has offered to confute the appeal.*"—What need?—when it was confuted before it was wrote, by many excellent books on that ſubject.—Beſides, what ſignifies it what countryman the anſwerer of a book is, if the anſwer be good.

Page 372.—"*On which ſide lay the invincible prejudice in this caſe?*"—Is the maintaining different ſentiments on the ſame ſubject at two different times, any proof that at one of thoſe times, either prejudice prevailed, or the opinion maintained was contrary to conviction?—May not a man

man judge very fairly, and without prejudice, according to the evidence at one time; and judge as fairly, though differently, at another, from different evidence, or a different view of the ſame evidence?—If then change of opinion implies not prejudice, nor wilful diſſimulation, his grace might be, and I doubt not was free from either of theſe in the particulars recited.—We deſire to know how our author defends the change of opinion mentioned, p. 207?—And probably that defence may acquit his grace as well as our author.—As to the note at the bottom of this page, I cannot think that our author, upon recollection can think it any impeachment of any man's character, to ſhow that a perſon of a different way of thinking ſpoke diſreſpectfully of him; and therefore it needs no conſideration; ſuch things rather hurt the ſpeaker.

Page 376.—I cannot ſay but I was a good deal ſurprized on reading this page; and almoſt fancied, when I ſaw here a detail of the good effects of the *free and candid diſquiſitions*, now exiſting, that I had not rightly comprehended the concluding paragraph of the foregoing page, where, as I recollected, it was aſſerted, that this book was ſuddenly gone into oblivion; but upon recurring to the place, I found it even ſo.—How this can be reconciled I do not pretend to ſay.—The truth of the prophecies contained in the following part of this page, and the beginning of the next, muſt be left to time to diſcover; in the mean time, our author will not perhaps expect that they ſhould have any influence, except on thoſe, who entirely ſubſcribe to his peculiar ſentiments; becauſe we are now-a-days ſo accuſtomed to hear thoſe of various de-

nominations, who call themſelves reformers, take to themſelves the honour of being the *only wiſe* and the *only good*, and conſign all who differ from them (as far as in them lies) to infamy and puniſhment, that we learn to bear thoſe things with Chriſtian patience.

Page 377.—"*Undoubtedly ſuch as have not this agreement with holy writ, ought not to be retained in the church.*"—Who muſt try this agreement?—Every private perſon; no doubt our author would ſay; becauſe of the right of private judgement.—Very well; then by the ſame rule, all who think they perceive this agreement, ought to uſe their endeavours to retain them in the church.—Therefore this ſentence we cannot admit as true, unleſs, inſtead of "*ſuch as have not this agreement*," our author will allow it to ſtand thus; viz. "*ſuch as are not thought by thoſe, who wiſh to retain them, to have this agreement.*"—And then the ſentence will not ſerve his turn, becauſe it will only import, that none ought to retain ſuch things as they think wrong; and this I ſuppoſe nobody will deny.

Ibid.—"*But nothing can be more cruel, nothing more inequitable, than to inſiſt that candidates for the miniſtry ſhould give their ſolemn aſſent and conſent to articles of faith, which many of them muſt think inconſiſtent with the word of God.*"—If our author hereby means to charge our church with inſiſting upon men's aſſenting to, what they think inconſiſtent with the word of God, knowing or ſuppoſing that they think ſo; he has often been told, and he knows it himſelf, that we are ſo far from inſiſting upon any ſuch thing, that the very end of requiring ſubſcription is to be aſſured (as well as it is in our power

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to be) that they actually think what they ſubſcribe is indeed conſiſtent with the word of God; nay, and if we could prove that they thought otherwiſe, he knows we ſhould be ſo far from obliging them to ſubſcribe, that we ſhould not even admit them to do it.—If he means, (as we ſuppoſe he really does) that requiring ſubſcriptions in general, is cruel and unequitable; we hope the lawfulneſs, utility, and even neceſſity, has been ſufficiently ſhown, and therefore need not be repeated.

Page 378.—"*I have given indiſputable proofs of what I am here advancing, from the writings of men of great eminence in the church of England.*"—We muſt beg leave to diſſent from our author here.—Let the readers judge whether the extracts here alluded to, have proved that the writers gave their aſſent to what they thought inconſiſtent with the word of God.—Have not all the pains theſe writers have taken, been to ſhow that their aſſent was conſiſtent with their tenets?—And if our author will not allow men to know *what they themſelves think conſiſtent, or otherwiſe*; I think there is no diſputing with him.—But ſuppoſe he had ſhown this, with regard to theſe particular men; would that conclude any others?—Certainly not.—Therefore he cannot have any grounds to aſſert what he here does; unleſs he can look into men's hearts.

Ibid.—"*It is an affair in which the prejudices of the people have nothing to do.*"—But it is an *affair* in the immediate *conſequences* of which the very ſtrongeſt of the prejudices of the people have a great deal to do;—if their prejudices have any thing to do with admitting preachers of all denominations to ring in their ears contradictions

tions of all they held moſt certain; and contempt of all they have thought ought to be reſpected; for nothing leſs could be expected from the abolition of ſubſcription.

Page 383.—"*Whoever performs thus much of what he promiſes at his ordination, will give little occaſion to bind him in any ſtricter obligation.*"—I cannot I own ſee any argument in this againſt the neceſſity or utility of ſubſcription.—For though a man does his duty ever ſo well at preſent, are we ſure he will always do ſo?—Or if we were ſure of this, would that make it unneceſſary to take ſecurity of others?—Or becauſe a man fulfils his ordination promiſes well, does that ſhow that it was wrong to take any ſecurity of him, at his ordination?—But further ſtill, even the making and fulfilling all theſe promiſes mentioned by our author, would not ſhow that the perſon ſo doing was fit for the miniſtry; becauſe, we have ſhown above, that theſe promiſes &c. propoſed by our author, would not even demonſtrate a man to be a proteſtant, much leſs to be a teacher of what we think true proteſtant and ſcriptural doctrine.

Page 384.—"*What evidence have you of the opinions of him who ſubſcribes the thirty-nine articles?*"—We have his opinions ſpecified, on as many points as we think neceſſary.—Which we have not by the anſwers and promiſes propoſed by our author?

Page 385.—"*No man, or body of men, have authority to authenticate one copy of the Scriptures rather than another.*"—Let us ſettle the ſenſe of the word *authenticate*.—If our author means by this word, that "*no man, or body of men, has a right to force others to acknowledge any one copy*

authentic rather than another, whether they think it ſo or not;"—We aſk who does it?—and are not afraid to anſwer; "*Not the church of England.*"—But if he means, that "*no body of men have a right to require thoſe who offer themſelves as candidates for the miniſtry among them, to declare whether they prefer one copy to the reſt:*" We deſire to ſee proof of the unlawfulneſs thereof, before we acknowledge it to be unlawful.—(For this is the old aſſertion of the unlawfulneſs of requiring ſubſcription.)—And we do not expect to ſee ſuch proof; becauſe our author has allowed it to be lawful, for a ſociety to require candidates to give their aſſent to ſcripture; and if this aſſent is confined to no particular canon or copy, I do not ſee any ſecurity the ſociety has from it.—The ſubſcriber may inſert, not only the Apocrypha, but the Decretals, or a part of the Alcoran in his copy, and call it the ſcriptures. —Nor will it help our author out, to ſay, as he does, p. 388.—That "*it is a ſufficient deſcription of the ſcriptures, to call them* the books of the Old and New Teſtament, generally received among Chriſtians."—For in the firſt place, this is a form in unſcriptural words; conſequently objected to by our author.—In the next place, if I recollect aright, there are in a book, called *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions*, ſome exceptions to the deſcription of the ſcriptures in our articles; which I ſuppoſe our author to adopt; and which, (juſt or not) by the help of the lax word, *generally*, may at leaſt as ſtrongly be urged here.—And laſtly, as our author has laid the authority of the fathers ſo low, I fear he has excluded himſelf from any proof what has, or has not been *generally* received by Chriſtians.—And indeed, I think

think, this is an argument againſt his whole plan, that if it be unlawful to deſire, or require candidates to declare whether they believe ſuch and ſuch doctrines to be contained in ſcripture; it ſeems as unlawful to require them to declare what books they believed to be genuine ſcripture. —One certainly muſt exclude private judgment as much as, and no more than the other.—And yet it ſeems quite uſeleſs, in ſuch a teſt as here propoſed, not to fix them to ſome particular canon or copy.—It appears, I think plainly, therefore, that our author's plan draws after it conſequences he either ſaw not, or is unwilling to allow; and that gives a very ſuſpicious aſpect to it, in the eyes of thoſe who think they ſee thoſe conſequences.

Page 388.—"*So that, whether you admit or reject the doubtful books, it is the ſame rule of faith and manners, by which you are guided?*"—Does not our church declare, that ſhe does not admit the authority of the doubtful books, in matters of faith?—And conſequently the rule of faith would not be the ſame.—But if we were to allow this; ſtill it would not ſhow that a ſubſcription not confined to any canon or copy, would be any ſecurity; becauſe a ſubſcriber, ſo unconfined, is certainly at liberty to reject as many as he pleaſes, either whole books or particular paſſages. And in fact, has our author never ſeen a Bible without the ſecond commandment?—And may not the ſame liberty be extended to any offenſive paſſage?

Page 390.—"*Nothing indeed could be more inſnaring to the younger ſort of candidates for the miniſtry, than this method propoſed by theſe worthy perſons abovementioned.*"—Here we have a fair proof

proof what is to be expected, from making alterations in these matters, in order to take in those who object to the present forms.—Alter upon the plan of these, whom our author allows to be *worthy persons*, and he is still dissatisfied; and calls it insnaring.—Alter upon his plan, and they would be dissatisfied; and call it insufficient; for, if they approved his plan, they would not offer a different one.—And alter upon either of these plans, and many others, especially those, who approve the present form, would be dissatisfied.—So that making alterations, with such views, would be running the hazard of the mischiefs that might attend a change, without any prospect of attaining the end aimed at; viz. universal acquiescence.—Nor can it be supposed that is to be obtained, so long as different men have different ways of thinking.—Might we not as well then rest at first, where we must rest at last, if ever; viz. in an established form; which those who approve may conform to; and those who disapprove may reject.

Ibid.—"*These formularies might be produced against them, when they had found reason to change their minds.*"—And what then?—If men change their minds for the better, what disgrace is it to them to have it seen they are wiser than they have been?—If they change for the worse, this cannot be owing to their having declared their sentiments in their wiser days; and the remembrance of what they once thought may contribute to bring them right again.—And as to their incurring any penalties; I suppose, if men were admitted to preferment without subscription, they would be equally liable to reprehension, for preaching erroneous doctrines, as they are now;

that is to ſay, if there were any eſtabliſhed doctrines; and if there were not, I do not ſee how there could be any fixed emoluments; ſince it ſeems abſurd to ſettle emoluments, and not to aſcertain what is required of thoſe who are to enjoy them.

Ibid.—"*An inconvenience to which the declaration I have propoſed is not liable?*"—How true this is, experience may teach us.—For inſtance, if our author had made the ſaid declaration, as it ſtands in the text, and as he approved it upon his firſt conſideration; what would have happened?—Upon a ſecond conſideration, (as he tells us in his note *d*, p. 382.) he would have found reaſon to change his mind.—In ſuch a caſe might not his own formulary have been produced againſt him?—And even if he had been allowed this ſecond conſideration; who knows but a third might have ſhewn him ſome freſh objection?—For if the promiſe there objected to be unlawful, I cannot ſee how almoſt any of the others can be lawful; eſpecially the principal one of making the ſcriptures the rule of teaching.—Beſides, if any of thoſe objections, which we have above mentioned, againſt ſuch aſſent to ſcripture as he requires, ſhould come into a man's head after ſubſcription, inſtead of before; (as ſome men have turned Quakers or Enthuſiaſts in advanced life; and ſome may perhaps have thought their knowledge of ſcripture leſs perfect in the progreſs of their ſtudies, then they thought it in youth) might not our author's formulary be produced againſt them alſo?—But, to cut the matter ſhort.—Either the propoſed declaration lays the candidates under ſome obligation, or not.—If it does lay them under any obligation, who can

ſay,

ſay, he may never think that too great a reſtraint, which he once thought a reaſonable one.—If it implies no obligation, where is the ſecurity to ſociety?

Page 396.—"*In the mean time theſe conſiderations make it ſtill more neceſſary, that the church ſhould content herſelf with the declaration ſet forth as above.*"—That is to ſay, our author having, as he thinks, proved that the biſhops admit men into the miniſtry, without being duly certified that they are qualified, concludes from thence, that it is fit the terms of admiſſion ſhould be ſo altered, that their lordſhips may have ſtill leſs evidence of their qualifications.

Page 397.—"*Interpretations of Scripture eſtabliſhed in perpetuity.*"—It would be ſomething to our author's purpoſe, if he could ſhow that we either eſtabliſh interpretations of ſcripture in perpetuity, or require the ſubſcriber to declare, that he will always maintain thoſe opinions: but, as he very well knows, that we neither pretend to bind up the opinions of men in future, nor even demand a declaration at preſent of the opinions of any, but thoſe who offer themſelves to the teſt voluntarily, by offering to undertake an office of importance, which requires it; when he knows alſo, that no ſubſcriber is required to declare any further than as it appears to him at preſent, all he is here combating, ſurely are hardſhips of his own creation.

I have only to add, that, though (as you will perceive by a few expreſſions) I have now had the pleaſure of reading the three very learned and important *Letters to the Author of the Confeſſional*, yet I had not ſeen any of them till after I had wrote what is here laid before you; which will

I hope be my excuſe, if I have remarked upon any paſſage, that is more judiciouſly conſidered in thoſe letters.

It is now time to beg pardon, ſir, for all this trouble, and to aſſure you that

I am, &c.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM

FINIS.